



## THIS BEWILDERING WAR

*By the same Author*

**NAZI GERMANY CAN'T WIN**









defensive, which, according to von Metzsch, "lacks all decisive force."

Experts are often one-sided; they know their subject, but they cannot see beyond it. Germany's military leaders were often, and still are, just "military men" and nothing else. Not that they failed to recognize the importance of the economic system for war, but they regarded it merely as a subsidiary or auxiliary weapon to strengthen the power of the army. They overlooked the fact that the economic system has itself an inherent power which can be thrown into the scales when military efforts on both sides are so balanced that no decision is possible, or the attempt to force a decision involves too much risk.

We try to answer these questions: Why is this war so different from other wars? Are we already at war? Or only in a preliminary stage of war, which will then develop, as Hitler prophesied in his speech of 30th January 1940, to a second more vigorous phase?

Something must be said about the way in which this book was written. It is complete in itself, but it is based nevertheless on my book *Nazi Germany Can't Win*, which was written before the outbreak of this war and published shortly after it. In that book I gave a summary of the economic, political, and military preparations of Nazi Germany for this war, and I think I may claim that on all fields my conclusions will stand the test of comparison with subsequent events. The rapid defeat of the Poles, the peace offensive which followed it, the threatened invasion of Belgium and Holland, the difficulties in which Nazi Germany's railway system now finds

itself, and much else were prophesied. In drawing my conclusions I nowhere ventured shots in the dark, but based them always on reliable material.

I have no means of access to "secret information." The material at my disposal is at the disposal of any man who cares to interest himself sufficiently in the matter. This circumstance caused one or two critics of my first book to point out that this or that fact was already known and out-of-date. Facts cited by me may have been known, but nothing likely to have any influence on the course of the war is out-of-date. My task there was to co-ordinate all the known factors into a system and show how they worked together. To have left out facts merely because they were already known would have meant gaps in the calculation. There is little in a country whose housewives and barmaids already had their mobilization orders in their pockets, and knew what work they were going to do in the event of war, which has no bearing on war preparations.

Under-estimating this fact a critic, who ought to have known his Germany better, reproached me with straining his credulity by declaring that the ships and spas built by the "Strength through Joy" organization were built with an eye to their subsequent war uses and for an invasion of the Baltic countries should it prove necessary. Now as a matter of hard fact the ships of the "Strength through Joy" organization were used to transport the notorious Condor Legion back from Spain, and to-day they are hospital and transport ships of the German Army. Further, in January last the camps of the "Strength through Joy" organization had

troops as their occupants along the Baltic, and Nazi naval units were concentrated in Baltic harbours with a view to exerting pressure on Sweden.

There is no such thing as absolute objectivity, and I have no wish to hide where my sympathies and antipathies lie. However, in estimating the significance of what has happened and examining the likelihood of what will happen I have done my best to be as objective as possible, even where my conclusions do not coincide with general opinion, which is, in any case, very changeable. Without every effort to maintain the highest possible standard of objectivity a critic must go wrong. No one will expect a complete representation and interpretation of the events of a war which is still proceeding. Quotations from my first book, *Nazi Germany Can't Win*, have been placed at the head of some of the chapters of this book in order to show how far it is possible to discover the real intentions of the enemy and foresee the probable course of events from an objective study of material available to everyone. In this book my aim is less to foresee coming events than to provide an explanation for the unexpected character of the war as it has revealed itself to us so far.

WILHELM NECKER.

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# THIS BEWILDERING WAR





## *Chapter One*

### WARS ARE ALWAYS DIFFERENT

THE night was pitch black. We were in Flanders and our company tramped forward over sodden fields of beetroots. We were "going up" to the front line. For most of the men it was the first time because, after the fighting at Langemark and Bixschoote, there were not many left of our original strength, and the companies had been filled up by reserves from home. The reinforcements were of the same type as the original men; most of them very young, with a high percentage of students. In their opinion they had been unlucky: they had been held back for a while in the garrisons at home, and the first "Flanders Divisions" had been drawn from other parts of the country.

We went forward fairly close together, as was still the custom at the time; it was the way the trenches were manned. It was very silent, and we had no idea how far we were from the real front.

Suddenly there was a rushing sound and then an explosion immediately in front of us. It happened three times in quick succession and there was an acrid smell of powder. Astonished, I stopped in my tracks. For the moment I could think of no explanation for what had happened, and then an N.C.O. shouted at me: "Shells. Lie down."

Then I observed that most of my companions were already on their bellies, but I had no time to join them because they sprang to their feet at once and we went forward again. A little further on we

came to the trench we were to occupy and took it over from the troops who were in it.

I should have laughed if anyone had told me that that was my "baptism of fire." We were well acquainted with the expression from our school books, but we had never thought that it would really be like that. We imagined it would be something unique and deeply impressive, something dramatic. The only impression the three shells had left on us new hands was one of vague disappointment. The word "shell" had always conveyed an idea of something terrible, something horribly destructive from which there was little hope of escape. A shell explosion was something which annihilated everything for fifty yards or so around, and now we laughed with some amusement at the nervousness of the "old hands." They had had only about a month more of it than the rest of us, but they had had time enough to learn a practical thing or two about shells and their effect. They laughed at us in their turn, rather grimly, and promised us "greenhorns" a surprise or two in the near future.

As a matter of fact we were spared their "surprises," and it was then their turn to be astonished. About a month before they had been unloaded from goods trucks "somewhere in Belgium" to march on the heels of a retreating enemy, who had suddenly turned on them and forced them back. After that they had taken part in the bloody fighting along the Yser. They were expecting something of the sort again, no doubt, and they found it difficult to recognize the new war. Germany's superannuated generals (some of them literally so and all of them so compared with the tasks of

modern warfare), to whose care the flower of her youth had been entrusted, had only just had time to realize that this was not the war they had been preparing for, when the war fundamentally changed its face again. For our generals—"buried after the Franco-Prussian War and dug up for this one," as we put it so frankly at the time—the machine gun and its effect on advancing infantry were purely theoretical matters. For the thousands of youngsters who went forward against them at Langemark and Bixschoote they were matters of very terrifying practical reality. Whilst the generals were still solemnly operating with all the paraphernalia of antiquated Field Service Regulations drawn up for a musical-comedy war of rapid movement and heroic cavalry charges, the rapidly-matured young soldiers of 1914 were already grinning cynically at their senile antics. But they themselves learnt only slowly that their own experiences dated so rapidly that there was not much they could teach the new men who came out to them straight from the garrisons.

We certainly suffered losses in the first few weeks, pretty heavy losses in fact. Our company went into that trench at full war strength 240 strong, but hardly half of us answered the roll-call when we left it. However, very few of us were casualties as a result of enemy action, and most of the casualties were due to dysentery and trench feet. That was not warfare for us and we failed to recognize such casualties as normal war losses. We regarded them as misfortune or accidents—until we noticed that they quite naturally belonged to the new phase of modern warfare we were experiencing. They were

just as much part and parcel of modern warfare as the numerous S.I.F.'s: the men who deliberately caused self-inflicted wounds in hands or feet because their nerves could no longer stand the strain of the struggle against the wet and the cold.

It always takes experts a long time to adapt themselves to new situations. It's not what they've learnt, and they don't like it. They have a fund of experience to which they attach great importance, and they don't care to admit that a new situation has rendered it useless. To re-learn means a danger of making mistakes, and no one likes making mistakes, particularly in war. The primary axiom of Germany's military theory was: "Go for the enemy, grapple with him at close quarters!"; and the secondary axiom was: "Defend every inch of the way!" One of the gross errors that resulted from this sort of thing in the new situation which arose in Flanders at the beginning of the war was the construction of breastworks above ground.

We could hardly believe our eyes when one day, immediately behind the waterlogged trench we were occupying, breastworks of planks, logs, and even railway metals began to rise. Instead of digging a new trench a few hundred yards further back where the ground was dry, here they were erecting breastworks hardly twenty yards behind our own mud bath. The completed effort was a wall facing the enemy with shelters let into it above the earth and protected from enemy action by perhaps four or five feet of soil. In front there was whatever protection was offered by a row of railway sleepers, and layers of sleepers and railway metals with piles of earth offered protection against direct

hits from above. Behind these breastworks there was a rear wall of boards and earth. Hygienically and from the standpoint of our personal comfort this effort was a great improvement on our muddy trench. What mud there was, was only a few inches deep and could be removed fairly easily. On the other hand, the enemy artillery also found the position a great improvement. It was easy to see and every hit could be observed. The only protection it offered us against artillery fire was where shells burst directly on top of the mound, and even then they had to be of moderate calibre. On one occasion a shell went through a shelter above my head, tore away the entrance, and then deposited its contents, shrapnel, in the rear wall. If it had been anything but shrapnel I should hardly be here to record the event.

A little later, whilst we were resting at the base, we heard that the whole line had been pulverized by heavy artillery. This could have been done quite easily, but it was in fact not done, perhaps because the people on the other side were adopting the same sort of tactics and were equally anxious not to be disturbed. If they had known, they could have done it nevertheless, because our artillery would certainly never have had enough munition to answer adequately.

In any case, we felt much safer in the second-line trench a few hundred yards further back. It was not so well built, but the overflow of the Yser did not reach as far as that. The dug-outs were not so good and not so well protected, but the line was more difficult for the enemy to observe. It offered a greatly inferior objective and shells usually

passed over the top of it. Conditions in the front line improved only after our engineers began to use cement, but that was expensive, and it offered no more than temporary protection until the calibre of the enemy artillery began to increase. The whole trouble was caused by the inability of our experts to adapt themselves to the new conditions of modern warfare, warfare in trenches, and to the specific terrain conditions.

*The war had turned out to be very different from what the experts had expected, and it cost much time and many, many lives before they consented to adopt the requisite measures to deal with it.*

### *A Change in Tactics*

That sort of thing happened again and again in the World War, and there is already no doubt whatever that it will happen in this war too. It took Germany's generals years to learn that it was insanity to insist on winning back every inch of lost ground and to insist that every inch of ground should be defended against the enemy to the last man. It also took the Allied generals years to free themselves from the illusion that an offensive with subsequent break-through was possible only after an artillery bombardment of the enemy positions lasting many days, and perhaps even weeks, so that when the German Army took the offensive on 21st March 1918 after only five hours of artillery preparation they were taken completely by surprise. On the other hand, when General Nivelle decided to attack the Chemin des Dames, in April 1917, his preliminary artillery bombardment lasted so long

that the German commanders had ample time to bring up reinforcements to deal with the offensive. In fact they even had time to consolidate the so-called Hindenburg Line. This line was intended as the backbone of the German defence after the voluntary withdrawal in February, but much of it was still only very sketchily prepared.

For days and days as we worked to extend and strengthen the line, which consisted of no more than a number of machine-gun positions linked up by a shallow line marked out with little flags, we could see a heavy curtain of fire, smoke, and flying debris in the air before us. But when the Allied offensive began the new line was ready, and it proved to be an invincible obstacle to the further advance of the exhausted French troops.

Once Germany's military leaders had decided to hold on to a certain position there was nothing that could move them from their decision, and in this way they missed the only opportunity of bringing the solidified front in the west into movement again. Before the withdrawal in February 1917 they had discussed the advisability of fighting a delaying action and causing the enemy severe casualties, but once the new line was prepared all such ideas were abandoned immediately, and the German troops made themselves at home and settled down permanently in their new quarters. To-day it is generally recognized that a unique opportunity was missed, and perhaps the possibility of launching counter-thrusts which might have opened up big possibilities, and would certainly have met with some success without costing excessively heavy casualties. Count Schlieffen, the great teacher of



the German Army in the period which led up to the World War, was quite right to reckon as one factor in his calculations that the enemy would always make mistakes, but he greatly over-estimated the abilities of his own generals, and overlooked the fact that their mistakes would at least cancel out the mistakes of the other side.

The greatest enemy of all efficiency in the conduct of warfare is the obstinate adherence to old rules and regulations in new situations. Both sides are guilty of this error: for instance, the Poles insisted on clinging to their cavalry, but in the event their cavalry forces were overwhelmed by tanks and aeroplanes.

Hidebound routine is an enemy in both small things and big ones. In the spring of 1916 my battalion went into the line before Messines. There were Canadians opposite us, and our predecessors in the line told us alarming tales of their raids. It appeared that it was quite impossible for us to send out patrols without their being mopped up by the enemy. I therefore proposed that our patrols should go out during the day. I went out myself first in broad daylight and came back safely. It occurred to me that the enemy posts would be much less on the alert during the day. It would not occur to them to look for us in broad daylight because day patrols between the lines were not usual, for very good reasons. My men therefore crawled out into No Man's Land during the day, when they were able to observe the usual paths taken by the Canadian patrols at night. Then in the afternoon our patrols could take up their positions for the night and wait for the enemy. The

men who served with the Canadians in the spring of 1916 before Messines in the neighbourhood of Douve Farm will no doubt remember that their night patrols became distinctly more dangerous in consequence.

In the beginning the new tactic had to be carried out "illegally," so to speak, because day patrolling was simply "not done" in positional warfare. To deviate from that custom was to break a rule which had already held sway for eighteen months, and rules mustn't be lightly broken. I was reminded of this incident again in 1933 by the Major who was entrusted with the writing of our regimental history, and who noted our new tactic at the time as something worthy of record. Naturally, it wasn't long before the new tactic was no longer new. The enemy recognized it and took his own precautions. Soon there was lively competition between our patrols and those of the Canadians to see which could take up their positions first and lie in wait for the enemy. By that time we enjoyed no particular advantage any longer.

It is not always just to blame the staffs for failing to evolve new ideas, because they are not very closely in touch with the trials and troubles of the man in the line. The idea came to me by accident. On a night patrol along the Yser Canal, in September 1915, a few yards in front of the Belgian positions near Poesele I lost my watch. If I was to have any hope of finding it I had to go out during the day. This I did, and incidentally I was able to make some quite important observations.

The point of all this is, that elasticity of conception is necessary in the conduct of warfare whether on a large scale or a small one, and the greater preparations which are necessary the more difficult such elasticity becomes. The brilliant idea which was carried out in the surprise offensive of 21st March 1918 first occurred to the German High Command as a result of the smaller-scale thrust of the British near Cambrai in the previous year.

### *Strategic Changes*

Wars are always different, we have said, and that applies not only to minor questions, to tactical matters on a small or large scale, but also to strategy itself. Strategy changes too. The military objectives of the High Command, and the conduct of warfare as a whole, are subject to certain special laws. According to Captain Laurent, of the French Navy,<sup>1</sup> strategy is something "intellectually creative," "the conduct of operations on a large scale." Tactics, on the other hand, is the execution of strategy. Laurent's definition is very wide, and therefore it is occasionally too ambiguous. What does "on a large scale" mean, for instance? How far does the expression extend? Does it mean only whole armies, or the whole complex of armies engaged in one operation, or does it apply to smaller units? Laurent himself admits that even a non-commissioned officer acting according to instructions received is a strategist in his own way if the instructions leave him any margin for independent decision.

<sup>1</sup> Capitaine G. Laurent, *Introduction aux Études de Stratégie*. Paris.

There are also a number of definitions from other sources which declare that in an era of totalitarian warfare the conception of strategy must embrace economic and political measures as well.

In any case, "intellectual creativeness" does not create out of nothing: it depends for its material on given facts. For Count Schlieffen it was an axiom that France must be crushed first, and his successors took over this idea and made it into a hard and fast law, despite the fact that conditions had changed radically in the meantime. The German High Command had to reckon with a much shorter mobilization period for the Russian Army, which had made a surprisingly rapid recovery from the blows it had received in the Russo-Japanese War. This recovery was due in particular to the aid rendered by France, and that was not fortuitous either. It had in fact become very doubtful indeed whether it was at all possible to crush France before "the Russian steam-roller" began to move forward. The fact is that, before the outbreak of the present war, military theorists in Germany had come to the conclusion that the attempt to carry out the Schlieffen Plan in 1914 was a mistake which endangered the prospects of success in the whole war. It was for this reason that the responsible military authorities in Germany proposed that in a future war Poland, and Poland alone, should be crushed, and that war in the west should be avoided altogether if possible.

The "intellectual creativeness" of the younger Moltke, who was responsible for Germany's offensive plans prior to 1914, had thus shown itself to be

wanting. It had exhausted itself in technical details and altogether overlooked important considerations of a different nature. Every calculation must prove wrong if any single factor is wrongly assessed. It is possible that such an error may be cancelled out in the event by mistakes on the other side, but that need not necessarily be the case. Germany's naval and military authorities overestimated the effectiveness of their submarine warfare, and in particular of their unrestricted submarine campaign, which brought the United States into the war—perhaps because it promised a success which would have hit the United States hardest of all. During the investigation into the causes of the entry of the United States into the World War, Senator Nye (who played a prominent role recently in the raising of the embargo on the export of war materials) dealt with a cable sent by the United States ambassador in London. A month before the outbreak of war he cabled to Washington:

“I am convinced that the financial strength of Morgan as the agent of the British and French governments is no longer sufficient to withstand the pressure of the approaching crisis. It is not improbable that we shall be able to retain our present favourable position in world trade and avoid a crisis only if we declare war on Germany.”<sup>1</sup>

Naturally, this was not the only reason. That was merely one reason amongst many, but it was certainly one of the decisive reasons. No country fights for democracy pure and simple, for an idea

<sup>1</sup> Retranslated from the German as published in the *Berliner Boersen Zeitung* on 15th December 1934.—*Tr.*

alone, particularly when the fight is to take place in another continent altogether. Statesmen are not Don Quixotes. *Countries fight when their vital material interests, or what their ruling classes consider to be such vital interests, are threatened.* Naturally, it is easy to make mistakes, decisive mistakes in this respect. Germany's strategy has already made two decisive errors concerning Great Britain's readiness to fight. It assumed a second time that Great Britain was determined not to fight even if Germany proceeded to secure for herself undisputed hegemony in Europe and therefore in the world.

Every big change in either economic or technical conditions will influence war plans from the beginning. Whether war is waged at all, and if so when and where, depends on the development of such factors and on the way in which their effect is estimated by the countries concerned. *An important factor is as accurate a knowledge as possible of the feelings of the civil population at home and in the enemy countries.* That is never a simple matter and it is very much more difficult in countries which are dictatorially governed. Dictators are very often quite wrongly informed concerning the feelings of their own people. In this respect they are hoist with their own petard. The suppression of the opposition means primarily that the open expression of opposition is suppressed, and not that the opposition itself is done away with. Opposition continues to exist, but it is unable to find a means of expression. On the one hand that is a state of affairs which dictators favour, but on the other hand it tends to make them deceive themselves concerning the real situation.

An interesting example of this is provided by the experience of the well-known American journalist Oswald Garrison Villard, who describes the incident in an article on his recent visit to Germany and Czechoslovakia :

“Dr Frank, who is especially hated by the Czechs, is obviously a man of marked executive ability, a determined, ambitious, perhaps fanatical, S.S. leader who would stop at nothing. He assured me, during a long talk I had with him, that every German stood behind the Führer, and would die rather than yield to the enemy. He was much astonished when I promptly disagreed with him, and told him that I had met many who had no such intention and did not stand behind Hitler. Before I left we had some interesting exchanges of opinion, and he actually thanked me for giving him the unusual experience of hearing the other side.”

That must indeed have been an unusual experience for a Nazi leader. Not even Herr Himmler, the leader of the much-feared Gestapo, really knows just how much opposition exists. And if he did know he would immediately come up against an almost insuperable difficulty, namely, where to put all the people he would find it necessary to arrest.

Even in the democratically governed countries there is by no means always a harmony of viewpoint between the rulers and the ruled. There is very often a fundamental difference between the will of the people and the actions of their rulers, but owing to the slowness with which the democratic machinery of government operates

such questions are often settled long before the masses get a chance of expressing their opinion effectively. For instance, it is at least open to doubt whether "Munich" would have been possible if the masses of the people concerned had been given a chance of expressing their opinions effectively.

In addition, fundamentally differing opinions are often held by different strata of society, and in the present war this has led to the repeatedly stressed statement that the war is not being waged against the German people, but against Hitler—i.e. against National Socialism. During the last war it was still possible to maintain up to a point the fiction that the peoples were fighting each other. Yet at the front there was little hatred between the opposing troops, who acted from a sense of duty, from a feeling of fear, or because they felt that their country was in the right, and who provided the required deeds of heroism. At home, of course, the usual hate propaganda continued to blare out for the benefit of the civil population, but the men at the front regarded it with cynical contempt. The men responsible for it were unaware that they were damaging their own cause. When official war aims and professed intentions are no longer taken seriously, and when no acceptable explanations are given for the continuation of the fighting, a dangerous situation arises. When a soldier begins to regard his opponent as a man like himself, with just as much justification as himself, enthusiasm for war ceases.

Before the outbreak of the present war Nazi Germany's propaganda machine justified the



obvious preparations for war by declaring ceaselessly that the German people were a higher race born to rule over inferior nations, but when war approached the machine began to declare with similar insistence that aggressive intentions lay solely with the enemy. The propaganda record was changed. Later we shall see what effect this has in practice.

The biggest change of all has taken place in technical and economic development. The development of the aeroplane and of wireless broadcasting, and their effect on the technique of war and propaganda, have made the hermetic sealing of the war fronts an impossibility to-day. Motorization has continued the tendency to mobility in military movement begun by the railway. In former wars it often took months before armies could come within striking distance of each other. The coming of the railways practically combined deployment and attack, and to-day motorization theoretically disposes of the necessity for preliminary deployment.

These and other circumstances, particularly in the development of armament technique, have completely changed the face of war. Many of the changes they have brought about have been entirely unexpected. Just those generals who were usually regarded as most up-to-date in their ideas thought that the modern development of military technique would make so-called lightning wars possible, in which the attacker could launch all his forces and annihilate the enemy before the defence could be organized and brought into effective play. In practice the truth has been seen to lie in the opposite direction.

Hitler, according to his own expression, proposed to fall on his enemies "like a thief in the night," but even when his enemy was a backward and weak country like Poland he found it necessary to prepare his attack, both militarily and politically, for months in advance. And when he was faced with powerful enemies he found it wiser to postpone his attack altogether, at least in the beginning.

Any enumeration of the reasons why the face of war has changed so fundamentally would be incomplete without mention of the great development in the military science of fortification. The reasons for the building of such defensive complexes as the Maginot Line on the French side and the Siegfried Line, or, officially, the West Wall, on the German side, derived from the changed conditions of the era. It is interesting to note, however, that the reasons for the building of these two lines were different. France harboured no aggressive intentions towards Germany. France's population figures are stagnant and her industry is chiefly occupied in her own colonies. On the other hand, Nazi Germany certainly did harbour aggressive intentions, though for the moment not in the west. The Siegfried Line was therefore constructed to strengthen Nazi Germany's defence in the west until such time as she should be ready to take the offensive there also. Germany's industry was particularly hard hit by the economic crisis; her Nazi rulers saw in an aggressive war her salvation from economic eclipse, and they regarded war as their salvation from final political defeat at the hands of Germany's democratic forces.

The time when militarism as such held sway over

economics and technique has passed, and the World War raised new political and economic problems on both sides. In the meantime this development has been continued. As a result the character of war itself has changed completely. *To-day economics and politics hold sway and militarism and its representatives have to act at their behest.* The days when Ludendorff as Chief of the German General Staff could demand the complete subjugation of both to military necessities have gone. Ludendorff failed to recognize the changed circumstances, just as Hitler did when he spoke grandiloquently of his attack "like a thief in the night." Even National Socialism itself has abandoned this tactic. When the German Army marched into Austria, and later into Czechoslovakia, some attempt was still made to maintain the fiction of the "lightning war," though both happenings had been long expected. *The present war has been different from the beginning.*

The out-and-out military man is no doubt deeply disappointed at the absence of any real fighting in the main theatre of war. The expected air offensive against the Western Powers, which was certainly planned by Nazi Germany, has not been launched. The air armies which were to have played such a decisive and devastating role according to the book *Bombs on Prague*, which was regarded as a warning by leading British military circles, have remained invisible. Before the German troops marched into Czechoslovakia the Czechs were threatened with the destruction of Prague, and many other towns, by hundreds of aeroplanes. In Poland, where there was no real defence and no possibility of effective counter-

attack, the Nazi leaders did launch their air squadrons, but up to the present the biggest concentration of German aeroplanes which has yet appeared in action on the Western Front amounted to no more than a couple of dozen, and then they were fighters and not bombers. That is a rather weak dose compared with the concentrated mixtures we were taught to expect in modern air warfare.

Headquarters on both sides continue to report with boring monotony nothing but minor scraps between reconnaissance patrols, and so-called artillery duels of such a nature that they would have found curt mention on anything but the quietest days on the Western Front during the World War. War correspondents at their wit's end for copy churn out columns of excitement about every chance dog-fight between a handful of planes. If that had been done during the World War the newspapers would have found no place to print it all. Yet this war is no child's play. It is one of the decisive combats in history, and it will extend its orbit. The neutrals are being forced into the struggle more rapidly than they were during the World War owing to the blockade, the threat to their shipping, and the campaign against purely mercantile shipping activity. There is more behind Soviet Russia's efforts to seize advanced posts in Poland and in the Baltic States than just "Red Imperialism." In the last war there were two combatants: the Allies and the Central Powers. To-day the struggle is three-sided. The risk involved for all the combatants is greater to-day than it was in the World War, and in many countries, if not in all, the fronts do not

coincide exactly with national frontiers, and sometimes cut right through the civil population, splitting it into two camps.

*Why are Wars always Different?*

Wars are the result of political differences. To-day political differences are almost invariably due to economic reasons. Many reasons were adduced to explain the World War, but in the last resort each side explained it as the desire of the other side to establish its economic hegemony, to which end it necessarily fought for political hegemony. Great Britain and France declared that Germany harboured plans for the domination of the world, whilst Germany declared that the two other Powers, and in particular Great Britain, begrudged her "a place in the sun."

In this war the economic reasons for Germany's expansionist ambitions are so clear that it is hardly necessary to discuss them. Moral arguments are being used by both sides merely to justify their war aims after the event. The horrors taking place in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany were well known for many years before the outbreak of war, but the Allied Powers took official notice of them only when it suited their book.

Economic interests directly affect military decisions. The example of Roumania in the last war was interesting in this respect. The Allied Powers were anxious to cut off Germany from Roumania's oil, which the Central Powers badly needed, whilst Germany sought to obtain complete control of Roumania's oil production. The

Roumanian Government has still every practical reason for appreciating the strength of this argument.

There it was a question of the direction in which the military effort was launched, but to-day the way in which the war as a whole is conducted is determined more than ever by economic considerations. It is no accident that Nazi Germany has remained on the defensive in the west since the outbreak of the present war. It was lack of raw materials which caused her to remain on the defensive and to act as though there was no war at all in the west. It was only after her peace offer was rejected that she promptly threatened that Great Britain would now be made to feel "the whole weight of modern warfare." Even then nothing happened on land even remotely reminiscent of war along the lines we were accustomed to in 1914-1918. France was left out altogether, and this attitude of Germany towards her is one of the reasons why the present war is proceeding in such a strange fashion—at least in the west.

But even in the east what actually happened did not tally with what the Poles and their allies expected. It was confidently reckoned that after the preliminary and inevitable retreat the Polish Army would stand on the defensive and give a good account of itself, but in fact when the actual struggle was expected to begin it was in reality all over. Insufficient attention had been paid to Poland's economic weakness and to the military technical backwardness which resulted from it. Nazi Germany did not make that mistake, and she overwhelmed Poland's infantry and cavalry

with highly mobile and technically efficient tank and air divisions. Without bothering to establish the unbroken front familiar to us from the last war, the German forces drove deep wedges into enemy territory. Against all the rules of the last war the German forces advanced rapidly into the interior of the country, using weapons against which the Poles had no effective defence.

When war is being waged as an aggressive undertaking it must, for political reasons, be waged differently. A country waging an aggressive war is even more in need of moral, or pseudo-moral, justification than is a country defending itself against attack. In his book *Die Ueberraschung im Kriege* (*The Element of Surprise in Warfare*) General Erfurth writes:

“Generally speaking the result of a war cannot be seen with certainty in advance. And even if victory seems absolutely certain, not every statesman will be able to throw all misgivings of an ethical nature to the winds.”

The technical reasons which invariably cause a war to run counter to general expectations have already been mentioned in connection with Poland. These reasons also derive from changes in economic development. Motorization, the development of the aeroplane, and the industrialization of new countries after the World War, introduced a new period in the progress of military technique which has produced altogether new forms of warfare.

Thus it is not only tactics on a small scale, tactics on a given short sector of the front, but tactics in general, and in the same way strategy itself, the

preparation and conduct of war as a whole, which change. *Every new war is different from the war which preceded it*, and it is the task of theory, "foreseen reality," to see what is coming and to make allowances for it. That is a very complicated process because it must embrace more than purely military affairs. Foreign and domestic affairs and technical, industrial, and financial development must be taken into account.

It must be recognized that the German General Staff has drawn far-reaching conclusions from the changes which have taken place since the World War. This was made easier by the fact that Germany's military authorities had to begin all over again on almost every field. They were less hampered by tradition than most of their colleagues in other countries. For instance, it was the German Army which worked out the first complete scheme for the use of tanks, and this scheme was effectively put into practice. Modern tanks are more rapid than those of the World War. The question therefore arose whether they should move forward at a speed considerably slower than their capacity in order to let the infantry keep up, or whether they should move forward rapidly and then wait for the infantry to come up. The leaders of some armies have held one view and some the other, but Germany's military leaders made the tank into the chief weapon of attack, and adapted the speed of the infantry to that of the tanks. The infantry was loaded on motor transport. This, together with the use of the aeroplane in the most effective fashion, was the chief advantage enjoyed by the German troops in their war against Poland.



It was a decisive error on the part of the Poles not to have foreseen such tactics.

Now that wars have become more complicated owing to the close co-operation of political, economic, technical, and strategical factors it is more difficult to form an accurate judgment. Attack and defence will vary in each particular case according to the front involved, the enemy concerned, the political situation, and economic conditions. What seems to the participant in the war of 1914-1918 as wrong may very easily be right, and vice versa. In fact, a thing can easily be right on the one hand and wrong on the other.

We shall therefore have to adopt a different criterion each time according to whether we are considering the war in the east or in the west, the war from Nazi Germany's standpoint or from that of her enemies. We shall also have to distinguish between the various periods of the war, and take the domestic situation on both sides into account.

It is not the intention of this book to enumerate the chain of events, but to supply as far as possible an answer to the question of why things have happened as they have. In seeking to supply this answer we shall observe how extraordinarily complicated the war has become, and we shall see that neither side has yet succeeded in adapting itself completely to the changed conditions, and that both sides have made mistakes as important as a lost battle to the one and a victory to the other.

## Chapter Two

### THE WAR IN POLAND

"It was quite clear, however, that if Poland remained firm she would have to take the full force of Nazi Germany's first blow, a blow increased in strength by the building of fortifications along Germany's western frontiers" (Necker, *Nazi Germany Can't Win*, p. 194).

THE first blow in this war struck Poland. A rain of bombs fell on railway stations, railway junctions, aerodromes, towns, barracks, and roads. Simultaneously German troops attacked, apparently all along the line. In the beginning it looked as though the Poles were in a position to offer effective resistance at certain points, and even to advance into German territory. This was reported from East Prussia and from Silesia. It was strange that in a number of places along the old German frontier Polish troops continued to maintain themselves for a comparatively long time, whilst everywhere else German troops had advanced far into Polish territory. As so often happens in war, both parties were able to report "victories" simultaneously, sometimes at the same place.

This absurdity turned out to be quite correct. The Poles did achieve certain successes. In his speech of 6th October Hitler mentioned one such incident:

"As the Divisions of the army under the command of General Blaskovitz moved forward to cover the left flank of the army of General Reichenau,

which was advancing rapidly towards the Vistula, and pushed forward towards Warsaw with instructions to ward off the attack of the Polish Central Army against the flank of General Reichenau, the thrust of this army suddenly landed on the army of General Blaskovitz while it was on the march at a time when it was generally supposed that the main forces of the Polish Army were already in retreat to the Vistula."

The Polish Army seems to have enjoyed successes in the beginning, and Warsaw reported the recapture of Lodz. However, any permanent success was impossible because this attacking force was isolated, surrounded by the Germans, and out of touch with the main Polish forces. That this army still existed and was able to advance from the Posen district was solely due to the fact that it had not been seriously attacked by the Germans. The German forces delivered their main blows from East Prussia, from the Silesian-Czech industrial area, and from Slovakia. The attack on the untenable corridor between Pomerania and East Prussia was a minor operation only, and towards Posen the Germans contented themselves with slow and delaying actions.

Along the main lines of attack Nazi Germany's invasion developed exactly according to plans openly discussed for years previously in a series of German military theoretical publications.<sup>1</sup> Air attack hampered the deployment of the defence, destroying railway lines along which reinforcements could be sent to the front, and generally throwing the defence into disorder. Simultaneously tank

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Necker, *Nazi Germany Can't Win*, p. 235 *et seq.*

forces advanced rapidly, armed tanks spitting fire followed by transport tanks. These forces penetrated deep into Polish territory and prepared the way for the advancing infantry. After a few days one or two small detachments made a fleeting appearance in the suburbs of Warsaw and gave rise to the report that Warsaw had already fallen. Even German officers believed this report and drove straight into the Polish lines.

The Polish Army was put out of action with practically one blow. A carefully prepared campaign worked out to the last scientific detail, taking advantage of all the enemy's weaknesses and making allowances for his strong points, was carried out with almost time-table accuracy. The preparations for the campaign had been worked out in such detail that even before the war the German military authorities knew exactly how much explosives they would need for each point marked out for destruction. The League of Germans Abroad had done good work in Poland, and just as in Austria and Czechoslovakia the German authorities were informed about every important detail, and all their calculations were controlled on the spot by the members of this organization.

The great courage displayed by Polish officers and men was ineffective against this mathematical method of waging warfare. Poland's armies were isolated and cut off from their bases before the war could really begin properly. Wireless companies followed closely on the heels of the advancing German troops, and in this way it was possible to learn interesting facts about Germany's military

methods. For instance, an interview was broadcast with men of a tank detachment which had just returned from a long spell of duty away from the main forces. A few large and small tanks were sent out to destroy certain specific objects. The Poles were unable to offer any effective obstacle to their progress because they were not in possession of sufficient numbers of anti-tank guns. In addition, the German advance proceeded so rapidly that no tank barriers had been erected. If the Poles had built them they would have proved a hindrance to their own troops, which were still well behind the German advance guard and streaming back over the same roads along which the Germans were advancing. What barriers there were had been erected along the frontiers, and it was an easy matter to outflank them.

These advanced tank detachments rolled forward rapidly, occasionally falling in with small units of Polish infantry who were helpless against them, or with troops of cavalry who charged them and were wiped out. The detachments safely reached their objectives, blew them up, and then returned to the main body. There were losses, of course, but they were not serious. Some tanks failed to return, but on the whole the scheme worked very well. The individual Polish armies were not even defeated in the real sense, and in the first two weeks of the campaign no major engagement in the old sense took place at all. Thanks to the use of new tactics and new weapons these armies were just rendered ineffective.

When the optimistic correspondents of the big European newspapers believed that the time had

come for big battles to take place the war was practically over. On 13th September the war correspondent of *L'Indépendance Belge* reported:

"Important battles are about to take place on the Eastern Front. Polish resistance is strengthening daily, and the German advance is now being entirely held up on several fronts. Warsaw is still in the hands of the Poles, and the German Army is far away."

That was not quite two weeks after the outbreak of the war. It is true that the German forces were still a long way away from Warsaw, but they were enveloping it in a great arc. It was not surprising that from time to time the rapidity of the German advance fell below that of the first couple of weeks, because, after all, guns, munitions, and other materials had to be brought up, and in particular petrol for aeroplanes and tanks. The same correspondent writes:

"The German forces advancing from East Prussia have now been held up for five days by the Poles on the Sierpce-Plonsk-Lomza front. The Germans wanted to force back the Poles to the east, towards the Vistula, but after fierce fighting they were compelled to abandon this plan. They are now turning their attention toward the Narev. The Germans are advancing over a very wide area and they can be cut off by the Polish forces in the neighbourhood of Byelostock and Grodno. Their advance is reminiscent of the manœuvre of the Soviets in 1920 which ended in a disaster for the Russian troops."

This comparison was an unfortunate one. This time it was the Poles who were in the east and not

the Russians, and it was the Poles who were threatened with disaster, a disaster which promptly overtook them.

The same correspondent continues:

"The German army advancing from Slovakia and operating between the Vistula and the San pushed forward too far and was hurled back by the Poles. The Polish troops have scored various successes on this front, and the German advance has been held up.

"The German troops operating east of the Vistula in the neighbourhood of Sandomir are being held up on the bank of the river.

"Fierce fighting is taking place in Pomorze,<sup>1</sup> where the Poles are taking advantage of the various lakes and advancing with their cavalry. Here the Germans have obtained no successes at all since the war began.

"The German forces advancing from Czenstochau are now engaged in the Skiernewice-Sochaczew-Kutno area where the Poles are resisting vigorously and preventing the Germans from approaching the capital."

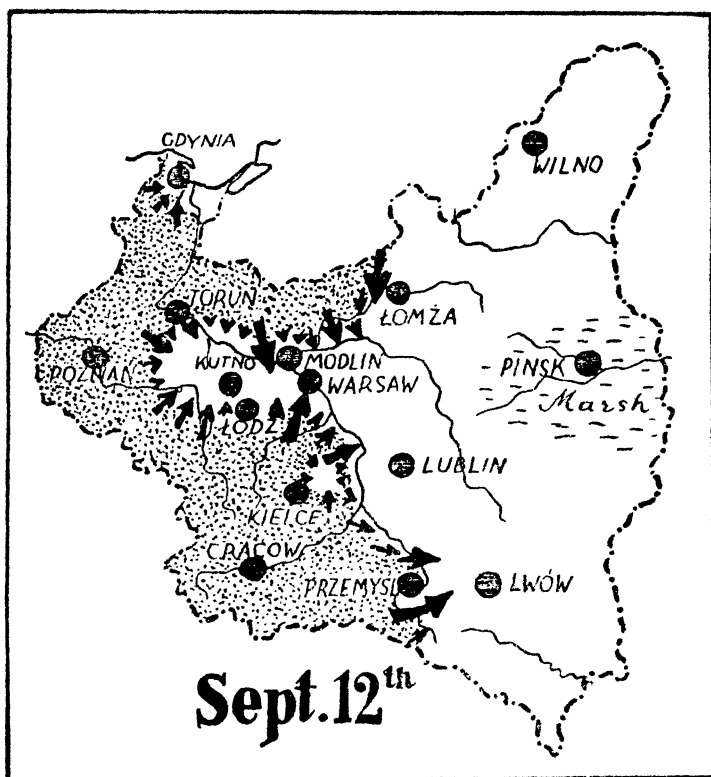
A map is necessary for the full appreciation of these reports, and their author could never have written them with one at his elbow.

The intentions of Germany's military leaders had not yet been recognized. In his book *Die Ueberraschung im Kriege* (*The Element of Surprise in Warfare*) General Erfurth writes plainly:

"Count Schlieffen, our teacher in mass warfare, envisaged the waging of a war in which the principle of annihilation would not be confined to

<sup>1</sup> German Pomerellen, the Polish Corridor area.—*Tr.*

battles or engagements, a war in which the enemy as a whole would be annihilatingly defeated. He foresaw a rapid decision in this war in one



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great battle, and he sought after the principles which would permit the waging of such a real battle of annihilation, not in order to discover how everything happened, and why it necessarily happened, but in order to discover how it would happen once again."



Germany's military leaders were thus not seeking individual battles; on the contrary, they were seeking to avoid them, and they did so necessarily because they wished to save their men for the big encounter in the west.

It is impossible to force Polish troops back to the east towards the Vistula from East Prussia because the Vistula flows to the south of East Prussia. To the south-east of East Prussia is the Narev, and the German Army would naturally come up against this river. There were Polish forces in the neighbourhood of Byelostock and Grodno, and they might have had the chance of delivering a blow against the German flank if this had been a main arena of hostilities. As the map will show, there was not much to cut off here because the area Sierpce-Plonsk is not far from the area Kutno-Skierniewice-Sochaczew. All Polish troops to the west of this area were practically isolated after the second week of the war. In view of the condition of the Polish roads and the lack of motorization in the Polish Army it would have been very difficult to withdraw masses of troops through this bottle-neck, which threatened to close up at any moment.

However, a few divisions did succeed in fighting their way through to Warsaw, where they were greeted with understandable enthusiasm, but their arrival could no longer alter the fortunes of the day. The powerful German enveloping movements had already practically cut Poland in two, and with it the Polish Army. Those who imagined that the Germans intended to press back the Polish forces frontally from Posen across the Vistula failed to

grasp the significance of Nazi Germany's military strategy. In such an event big Polish forces would undoubtedly have escaped to the east, where they could have united with the army already there and continued to offer powerful resistance.

The German commanders therefore calmly permitted the western Polish army to gain "successes" against comparatively weak German forces. Big Polish forces were occupied in this way and their attention was distracted from the main area of operations. In the meantime the main German forces advanced along the lines laid down for them. It was never the intention of the German Command that the troops advancing to the west of Warsaw from the north and from the south-west should make contact prematurely before Warsaw. It was more important for them that they should first draw a cordon behind Warsaw, thus encircling Poland's main forces. The Polish Army would then be enclosed as though in two circles connected narrowly across Warsaw itself—if the connection had not already been broken. In this way the Polish forces were thrown into complete confusion, vast quantities of material were lost, their morale was badly shaken, and their High Command found it impossible to keep control owing to the difficulties of communication.

Under the circumstances it is quite understandable that the German forces with the shortest march routes had to stop from time to time. Even so, the map will show that the marches carried out by the German Army were not inconsiderable for a war of fourteen days.

The report that the German troops operating

east of the Vistula were held up "in the neighbourhood of Sandomir . . . on the bank of the river" is misleading, because Sandomir lies on the left—i.e. west—bank of the river. Further, these troops cannot have been seriously impeded in their advance, because their objective was undoubtedly Sandomir. Sandomir was the basis of the new big Polish armament centre, established by the Polish Government when it realized that the industrial areas in Polish Upper Silesia were rather too close to the frontiers of Poland's "friendly and allied" neighbour, Nazi Germany. Unfortunately for the Poles, their leaders had not foreseen that one day this new industrial area could be taken under cross-fire from Silesia and Slovakia, and therefore doubly endangered.

The successes the Poles obtained from time to time were only against comparatively weak advance German posts protected by tanks. The main lines of the German advance were never seriously disturbed. These partial Polish successes were based on the same misunderstanding which caused German officers to drive innocently into Warsaw under the impression from their wireless that Warsaw had already fallen. Advance German units penetrated deep into Polish territory in many places, and when they met with serious resistance they retired. With this they fulfilled their real task, which was to discover where the main centres of Polish resistance were situated, to destroy them as far as possible, and facilitate the advance of the main bodies of troops behind them.

On 13th September the *Temps* published a Havas report:

“All the attempts of the German troops to break the Polish defensive lines along the Narev and the Bug have miscarried. Raids carried out by fast motorized detachments with a view to cutting off the communications of the Polish troops and destroying buildings behind the lines were brought to nought by Polish second-line troops.”

This report clearly reveals the German tactics. Even if the raids of the fast motorized units behind the German lines had been brought to nought, and we know this to have been incorrect, they would still have created a feeling of great insecurity amongst the Polish front-line troops. Everywhere Germany's fast tanks supported by aeroplanes appeared far behind the Polish lines, threatening communications and undermining the morale and security of the men in the front line. Even during the last war the effective threat to rearward communications played quite a role on the Western Front. Though the distances were comparatively short, advancing troops had always to reckon with the possibility of sudden counter-thrusts after a short time.

I remember a case in my own experience during the offensive of 15th July to the east of Rheims. The offensive itself was a complete failure. With less than a score of men I found myself cut off, at about midday, three or four miles in front of our old lines. I had made about the same number of prisoners, and I sent them back with one man as escort. He finally arrived in our lines with several hundred prisoners, men met with on the way who had surrendered because they thought they were cut off. A few more of my men, who had remained

behind, joined him "as escort." The Poles must have been even more deeply affected, particularly as many of them were unwilling to fight at all, because many of the Polish companies were composed, up to forty per cent, of Ukrainians, Byelo-Russians, and Germans. We shall have something to say on this important point later on.

However, apart from these superficial and optimistic correspondents there were others who had a better idea of what was happening. For instance, the *Temps* of the same date publishes a report, signed "I.B.," pointing out that the rapidity with which the military operations were conducted by the Germans during the first ten or twelve days of the war contradicted all the experience of former wars:

"The rapidity of the German advance and the haste with which the Polish troops concentrated on the frontiers effected their retreat to the Vistula constitutes an entirely new phenomenon in warfare. For the first time we have been able to observe the effects of a sudden attack executed with a great wealth of powerful modern motorized material—tanks, lorries, and aeroplanes—and assisted by particularly favourable conditions."

The report points out that the defence of Poland was a very difficult problem because the frontier was about a thousand miles in extent, describing a wide arc, clasped at the sides by German provinces and by districts occupied by German troops. The report then continues:

"In view of the great inequality of weapons the Polish protective curtain was promptly broken, and then without delay German covering divisions

followed by big units transported on lorries and supported by numerous aeroplanes began a thorough exploitation of the break-through.

"A similar mode of pursuit would have been impossible in the last war because tanks could then not advance quickly enough to overtake retreating infantry. The position is different to-day, and to the west of the Vistula German divisions are ceaselessly dogging the heels of retreating Polish troops to prevent them from forming any new line of resistance. Behind them big motorized units are taking the roads where there has been no very great destruction, ready to lend their support to the tank formations. In addition numerous aeroplanes flying low are harassing the retreating Polish troops from morning to night."

Now the Poles had no really modern fortifications along this line of retreat. They were thrown back from their own frontiers, where they had had many months in which to prepare themselves for resistance, and it is therefore no wonder that once they began to retreat there was little for them to do but to continue. The old Russian fortifications had not been adequately modernized and they offered no effective protection. In fact they were almost useless, because with their new tactics the Germans simply outflanked them everywhere. Fortifications are useful only when they can hold strong forces of the enemy in check or stop their advance altogether in one particular direction. The Polish military authorities, and with them many of the military experts of other countries, trusted to the great river line Narev-Bug-Vistula, and under other circumstances it might have

proved of value, but once this line was crossed by the enemy there was nothing more to hold up superior enemy forces.

The rapidity with which the German troops crossed the Vistula therefore came as something of a surprise. Military observers had gradually recognized that the rapid German advance was being carried out by comparatively small forces which were faced with big Polish forces, or could have been. No big fighting had taken place and the Polish troops had not been broken up in battle like the troops of the Negus a few years previously. Our reporter therefore continues:

“How did the pursuing troops arrive at the Vistula? And how did they succeed in crossing the bridges? That is something we shall know only when we have the evidence of eye-witnesses, because nothing has happened in the past on which we could base any accurate idea of what is happening now.”

The secret is not really difficult to unveil even without the evidence of eye-witnesses. It was a big operation scientifically prepared down to the last detail. One of the biggest factors in it was the crushing effect of tanks and aeroplanes against troops who had no means of defending themselves effectively. At the same time these troops might not even have been able to withstand an enemy no better equipped than themselves, because they were not united in their will to resist and many of them opposed the war altogether. Where the tanks were held up, aeroplanes came forward to clear the way, and when that proved insufficient motorized artillery arrived after a short interval,

supported by motorized infantry, and opened up the path for a fresh advance.

General Eimannsberger, Germany's leading theoretician on tank warfare, writes as follows:

"The fundamental difference between this form of attack and former methods is that this time the tank, chiefly the medium tank, is the chief weapon, and everything else is subordinate to it. Such an advance could proceed at an average speed somewhere between six and ten miles an hour, so that the fighting would be short and sharp, and the defence, if any, crushed rapidly.

"In the short space of time permitted to him by such an attack the enemy would be unable to occupy new positions to the rear. Where such positions already existed the tank attack would proceed against them at once without any further preparation, though in this case the lack of artillery would have to be made up for by air action, and strong air units would go into action.

"Here we have a method of attack which could take the enemy by surprise. Because no protracted preparations are necessary, and thanks to the speed at which the battle develops, there is every hope of defeating the enemy before reinforcements can be brought up. Of course, the attack will always have to reckon with his air reserves going into action."<sup>1</sup>

Poland did not possess such air reserves. What remained of the Polish air arm after the sudden and carefully prepared bombardment of its aerodromes was spread out over such a long front that it was impossible to concentrate any

<sup>1</sup> General Eimannsberger in *Wissen und Wehr*, July 1938.

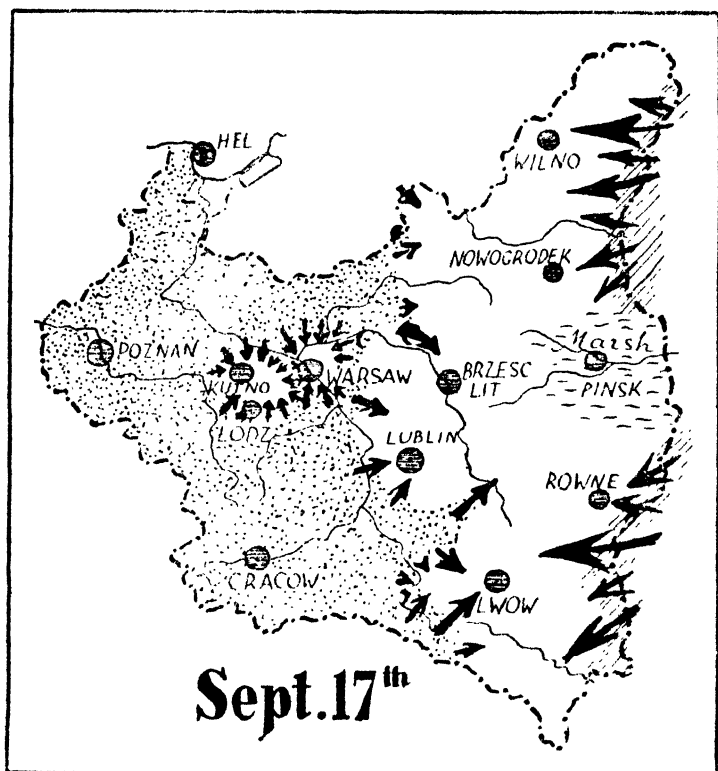


real strength rapidly to meet the German threat. Thus the conditions for an attack such as General Eimannsberger describes were particularly favourable. It is astonishing that the proper authorities in Poland and elsewhere remained blind to this possibility and therefore failed to take appropriate counter-measures. Nazi Germany's intentions were clearly expressed in her military literature, and General Eimannsberger declared quite plainly in the same article that every nation which wished to live must place itself in a position to attack effectively, and therefore new methods would have to be evolved. The new weapons, he declared, could only be the tank and the aeroplane.

The circumstances likely to arise in the event of pursuit had also been carefully calculated. The time likely to elapse before the enemy could bring up his own tanks to stem the advance had been estimated. General Eimannsberger had made his calculations for a much more difficult front, for a fortified defence in the hands of an enemy himself in possession of large numbers of tanks and an efficient air arm. Thus the scheme could be still more easily put into operation against Poland, whose defences were even behind those of the World War. Although Soviet Russia on the one side and Nazi Germany on the other both had big tank forces and powerful air arms, Poland had made little attempt to provide herself with adequate air and tank forces. Of course, even at best Poland could not have hoped for anything like parity with either of these two Powers, and in actual fact her army was not even as well equipped

as that of Czechoslovakia, a country with a population only half the size.

By the middle of September very many war correspondents still failed to recognize the real



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significance of the Polish retreat; for instance a special correspondent of *The Times* wrote as follows on 14th September:

"It is now apparent that the Germans have met with a serious check to their advance on the Eastern Front. They have met with this check even before

they have reached Poland's natural defence line, the rivers Bug, Vistula, and San."

A few days after this, even before the Russian troops marched in, the German Army had crossed the San and was advancing from there on to the rear front of Warsaw. With this the whole Vistula line was threatened.

Nazi Germany's military leaders certainly did not fail to recognize that they were dealing with high-spirited and courageous enemies, and it was left to Hitler himself to subject a beaten enemy to indignity and mockery, as he did in the Reichstag speech he delivered after the Polish campaign. On 12th September the official German broadcast declared:

"It is wrong to believe that the German Army has an easy task in Poland. This war is no military walk-over. We are dealing with a determined and courageous enemy."

The special correspondent of *The Times* set his hopes on the fortress of Modlin, which he described as having been recently strengthened. Thanks to the employment of cement it would be able to withstand heavy artillery fire if the enemy crossed the Narev near Lomza. The area between the Narev and East Prussia was made difficult for military operations by the presence of many forests and marshes. However, the correspondent then admits that although the German advance had been slowed down it was nevertheless remarkable how quickly it had gone forward over very difficult country. Then comes a ray of light:

"Now that the war seems to be settling down to defensive positions on the Bug, Vistula, and San rivers, German strategy seems to aim at a gigantic

pincers movement to outflank both the San and Bug rivers. The objective in the north is thus Byelostock and Brest-Litovsk."

However, the whole truth of the position had not yet been recognized, and everywhere in the Press one could read that the Poles were fighting a previously prepared rearguard action, that they had never intended to offer any real resistance to the German advance in West Poland, and that now Poland's real defensive strength would be put to the test.

That sounded very encouraging, but was in fact false. If it had really been the intention of the Polish military leaders not to offer any real resistance to the German invasion in western Poland, but to conduct a rearguard, delaying action only, they would never have left so many troops there, and those that were there would have been withdrawn more quickly. If they had really intended to make the Narev-Bug-Vistula line their main line of defence then they would have placed more troops there and would have taken care to see that the line was properly fortified. With comparatively little effort and expense the military engineer can turn a river into a formidable tank obstacle with the help of ordinary field defence works. Without the tanks the German aeroplanes were not so dangerous, and with their aid alone the German troops would hardly have been able to cross the rivers. However, in order to hold such a line effectively the defence needs fresh troops with a high morale and not troops retreating helter-skelter from lost positions in a demoralized and disorganized condition.

In fact the Polish forces had been separated from

each other in many places by advancing German columns. The Polish Corridor was soon cut, and the Polish troops stationed in Gdynia and on the Hela Peninsula were isolated. One German army, or rather two, went forward from East Prussia, one advancing to the south and the other to the south-east. The army from Silesia, which advanced over Czestochau, cut off the whole of western Poland, acting in concert with the army which advanced from East Prussia to the south. And finally an army advanced into Poland like a wedge from Slovakia.

The Poles did all it was possible to do in the circumstances, and to judge from Hitler's Reichstag speech, von Reichenau's army group seems at one time to have been in a far from enviable position. The Poles themselves seem to have believed in the possibility of a counter-offensive, and to have attached exaggerated importance to minor successes, particularly when Warsaw was able to report that Lodz had been recaptured. In reality, however, the resistance offered was not of a serious character and was perhaps even deleterious to the Polish cause. The main aim of the Polish High Command should have been to extricate all the troops trapped in the great salient as quickly as possible. If the Polish intention with these counter-thrusts was to gain time in which to carry out the necessary withdrawal more successfully than the Polish High Command was right to make them, but if it aimed at driving back the German advance altogether, or even holding it up for any length of time, then the counter-thrusts were nothing but a waste of time, energy, and material.

When the Western European newspaper correspondents announced that the real war in the east was about to begin because the Poles had now arrived at their actual defensive positions, the war was practically over. The whole campaign was like a brilliant game of chess played by a strong player against a mediocre opponent. The position on the board did not look so bad for the mediocre player, and his chances still seemed fair, until one move radically altered the whole situation and exposed the hopelessness of his position. The decisive move in the Polish campaign was when the German forces crossed the Narev-Bug-Vistula line. The comparison with a game of chess must now cease, because having made their master-move the Germans did not wait patiently for the Poles to reply, but acted themselves all over the board. In a few days German troops were in Brest-Litovsk, a hundred miles to the east of Warsaw. With this the defence of Warsaw and Modlin, heroically conducted though it was, lost all military significance.

As far as one can judge from the triumphant speech Hitler delivered on 6th October, the German Army could have taken Warsaw before 27th September had it wanted to. However, that was not its intention, and could not have been in view of its general plan of campaign. Had Warsaw been taken earlier the strong garrison might have made good its escape to the east. There were already German troops in the east, it was true, but they were not yet present in any great strength, and in some places they had already been replaced by Russian troops. The German Army had time,

and its commanders had every reason to economize in both men and material.

When Hitler declared in his speech that the losses of the German Army had been hardly one-twentieth part of what might have been feared at the beginning of the campaign he was, of course, indulging in one of his usual exaggerations. According to him the cause of the alleged low rate of casualties was due to the excellent training of the German troops, the deadly effect of their arms, and the brilliant leadership of their generals. As Hitler declared that the admitted losses were "hardly a twentieth part" of the expected losses, the only conclusion is that he must have expected his losses to amount to about a million men. In a campaign which lasted four weeks that would have been about 35,000 men a day, a really terrific figure, and one that the German Army would certainly not have been able to stand. Germany's crack troops were flung into the Polish campaign, and in view of the fact that for fifteen years there was no compulsory military service in Germany the numbers of these troops are not very large. In addition, the chief losses were amongst the airmen and tank troops, and these men are technicians not so easily replaced.

On the other hand, the official German losses are certainly placed too low. Hitler informs us that the German Army lost 10,572 dead, 30,322 wounded, and 3409 missing in the Polish campaign. Apart from these figures other estimates have been published, some of them from semi-official sources, but one cannot rely on any of them. It is quite possible that Hitler in his figures did exactly

the opposite of what he said, and that in reality the German General Staff had reckoned to lose between 45,000 and 50,000 men, and that Hitler took this expectation and presented it to the world as the reality. In any case, this is very much more likely than his taradiddle about "hardly the twentieth part," etc. For instance, it is officially admitted in Germany that several hundred leaders of the Hitler Youth organization were killed, and this suggests that the death-roll was quite considerable. The members of the Hitler Youth represent only one section of the younger men of the German Army, and their "leaders" represent only a small fraction of their membership. We have no reason to suppose that these youth leaders were particularly exposed to enemy fire. On the contrary, to judge from the usual practice with the leaders of Nazi organizations, they are more likely to have been spared the most dangerous jobs.

The suggestion that the German High Command was prepared, if necessary, to reckon with a million casualties means that they were prepared to lose one quarter of all the men mobilized for the campaign, and that would have been more than the total number of first-line troops engaged. This consideration in itself is sufficient to show that Hitler's figures are suspect. It is reasonably certain that the German losses were considerably higher than Hitler has admitted, and that they were diminished in the telling in order not to shock German public opinion.

On 15th September the newspapers reported that the Poles had sent reinforcements to the south where the Germans were advancing on Lemberg.



There was a danger that Poland would be cut off from Roumania. However, it is difficult to see where the Polish High Command could have found these strong reinforcements to send to Lemberg. At the same time the German official report announced that the road from Lublin to Lemberg had been cut by strong German forces. To the north of Sandomir German troops had already crossed the Vistula. These forces can only have belonged to the units situated somewhere in eastern Poland, which were certainly not crack troops. The battle near Radom was at an end, and 60,000 Poles had had to surrender. The gap between the German armies operating against Warsaw from the north and south had again closed in.

To the east of Modlin the Narev had been crossed. The German advance on Brest-Litovsk was proceeding rapidly. The last frontier fortress, Osovietzk, had fallen. Gdynia was in the hands of the Germans, though the garrison on the Hela Peninsula still held out, and continued to do so for a few days. Nothing further need be added to this picture. At this point Poland was already lost beyond all hope of recovery.

### *Soviet Russia Intervenes*

As soon as the inevitable collapse of Poland became clear, and the strategy and tactics of the German General Staff were revealed, Soviet intervention began and the Red Army marched in. We do not propose to deal with the preliminary history of this new invasion here; it must be dealt with in connection with Soviet foreign policy as a

whole. However, one peculiar and interesting fact should be noted, namely, that all those who disapproved of the negotiations with the Soviet Government for the conclusion of a pact of mutual assistance against aggression, though they seldom expressed their feelings openly, began to wax indignant immediately Soviet Russia adopted an independent line.

The negotiations dragged on from March to August without result. Soviet Russia was no more under obligation to Poland than Great Britain had been to Czechoslovakia in 1938. She was also under no obligation to Great Britain and France. And, as Voroshilov specifically pointed out in an interview granted to the Press after the final breakdown of the negotiations, the Poles had definitely rejected any active assistance from the Red Army. The quite understandable reasons which caused the Polish Government to take up this attitude will be examined later. The point at the moment is that Soviet Russia was under no obligation whatever. She had not refused to supply the Poles with arms, because there is nothing in her laws to prevent any country purchasing such things providing she is able to pay for them.

Poland did not, in fact, take advantage of this possibility, perhaps because she had not sufficient means of foreign payment at her disposal. The financial assistance promised to her by Great Britain either did not arrive in time or did not arrive at all, a circumstance over which the Poles have complained bitterly. In any case, the promised eight million pounds sterling represented

a very inadequate sum for a country on the brink of a terrible war. An interesting contrast is offered by the case of Turkey. No sooner had she signed the pact with Great Britain than she was granted a loan of thirty million pounds, and what is more she received it promptly. To grant eight million pounds as a loan to Poland to be expended in Great Britain was practically useless, because there was no longer time to arrange transports through the Baltic.

All those who had shown themselves extremely unwilling to welcome Soviet Russia into the "peace front" now became morally indignant, and abused her as "a hyena of the battlefields," and so on. Soviet Russia was suddenly an enemy more hated and abused than Nazi Germany.

What had really happened?

It was clear from the beginning that Poland would be overrun by the German armies. The only doubtful question was how long it would take, and that depended largely on the measure of assistance granted to Poland by the Western Powers. The requisite assistance was not forthcoming, perhaps because it was practically impossible in any case. Within a few days of the opening of hostilities, and in any case before two weeks had passed, German troops were everywhere advancing towards the frontiers of Soviet Russia and towards the districts occupied by Ukrainian and Byelo-Russian minorities. These minority districts had never been Polish, and in fact during the Russo-Polish War of 1920 the Western Powers were willing to let them be incorporated into the territory of Soviet Russia.

The clearest proof of this was the so-called Curzon Line. Poland obtained them purely as a result of Soviet Russia's weakness, and since then fruitless efforts had been made to "Polonize" them.

Up to the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia had not put forward any formal claims to these territories, but the situation naturally changed when there was every likelihood, in fact the certainty, that unless she acted these districts would be occupied not by a relatively weak Power like Poland, but by a strong and hostile Power like Nazi Germany. Under such circumstances these districts could be turned into a powerful basis of operations against Soviet Russia, and the oil-fields of southern Poland could be exploited by Nazi Germany to provide oil fuel locally.

But even more: at the end of June 1939 the Chief of Germany's General Staff, General Halder, had visited Esthonia and Finland with a view to concluding pacts of friendship with these two countries for Nazi Germany. Neither country was particularly well disposed to Soviet Russia, and Finland had always been quite definitely hostile. Such pacts of friendship with Nazi Germany would have become critically dangerous to Soviet Russia after the crushing of Poland. Between them Esthonia and Finland controlled Soviet Russia's entrance to the only ice-free channel open to her in Europe. In winter Murmansk is only conditionally available. This situation would have placed the people of Soviet Russia at the mercy of a coalition under the leadership of Nazi Germany, and such a coalition would not have been difficult to form.

There is no doubt that the Soviet Government realized all this clearly, and was prepared to act if necessary, though when it did act it was almost too late. German troops were already on the way to the oil-fields of southern Poland before the Red Army began to march, and they were actually in Lemberg and Brest-Litovsk before the Red Army arrived. The German troops then withdrew and the Red Army occupied almost exactly the districts allotted to Soviet Russia by the Curzon Line, and no more. The first Press reports announced that Soviet Russia intended to incorporate territory of the Polish Republic right up to Warsaw—*i.e.* including Polish territory proper—and the first maps issued purporting to give the new frontiers showed purely Polish territory in Soviet Russian occupation, but this proved to be untrue.

### *The New Situation*

With this the whole situation had changed, and not merely for Soviet Russia. Nazi Germany was deprived of her coveted common frontier with Roumania. Any Roumanian petrol supplies for Germany would have to cross Soviet Russian territory, and all further war plans depended on Soviet Russia's attitude. The Baltic States had to abandon their previous anti-Soviet policy, and they concluded "alliances" with Soviet Russia giving her the right to station certain forces on their territory and to use their harbours. At one blow all Hitler's dreams of Baltic domination were destroyed, and with them the illusions of certain Western European politicians, who up to the last

had fondly believed that Hitler was a strong bulwark against Bolshevism. No matter what one may think of Soviet Russia, it is hardly possible to reproach her reasonably for having taken the opportunity to ward off a very real danger, and one which has been poised threateningly over her ever since the days when she was invaded from Finnish territory and from Murmansk in the north, from Odessa in the south, and from Vladivostok in the Far East.

The governments of other European countries have always regarded Soviet Russia with her different social structure as more or less outside the European community, and the Soviet Government was finally compelled to accept this position and to pursue its own policy. To Soviet Russia it appeared that she was not wanted in the European front against Nazi Germany, though, of course, she was wanted in reality, but not on her own terms, even though her membership of the front against aggression was the keystone to the problem of war or peace. If Soviet Russia remained passive Nazi Germany could safely attack Poland, but she could not do so if Soviet Russia offered active resistance to that aggression. Soviet Russia stated the terms on which she was prepared to come in. Once those terms were rejected she had to act independently in the interests of her own security.

Just as Nazi Germany promised Soviet Russia all she desired as a condition for obtaining her neutrality in a conflict with Poland, so Nazi Germany had previously promised Poland large slices of Soviet territory in return for Polish acquiescence in Nazi plans. The Soviet Government

was well aware of this fact, and it is therefore extremely improbable that it attaches any very deep significance to the new-born friendship with Nazi Germany. In fact, up to the present, Soviet Russia has exploited this friendship in a fashion almost wholly to Nazi Germany's disadvantage. It is hardly too much to say that Hitler risked the war in reliance on Soviet assistance. He has not merely offered important hostages to Soviet Russia in the matter of a further prosecution of the war, but the present conflict in the Baltic has also robbed him of certain important supplies for which he hoped. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr Winston Churchill, was quite right when he declared in a speech delivered on 1st October 1939:

"I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in mystery inside an enigma, but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest."

Now unfortunately Soviet Russia has reason to believe that Hitler is not her only enemy. He was perhaps the immediate enemy, but behind him there might develop a great capitalist coalition against her, a coalition including perhaps a capitalist Germany freed from Hitler's dictatorship. Soviet Russia's national interest caused her to seek her security both in Poland and elsewhere.

We need not bother about the accuracy of certain sensational reports according to which Ribbentrop took with him an extra special titbit for Stalin when he went to Moscow, in the shape of certain dictaphone records taken secretly in Berlin and revealing Allied statesmen seeking peace in Western Europe at the price of war against Soviet Russia

in Eastern Europe. These conversations are said to have taken place whilst officially Great Britain and France were conducting negotiations in Moscow to draw Soviet Russia into the peace front. If this is true it would make an interesting counterpart to the simultaneous conversations conducted by the Soviet Government with British and French representatives on the one hand and German representatives on the other. However, neither German nor Soviet official sources have ever referred to the incident even in their wildest denunciations of their enemies, and we may therefore safely regard the report as an invention. In any case, it would have done nothing to alter the situation or essentially add to the knowledge of either party.

Soviet Russia could not remain inactive and watch Nazi Germany secure a common frontier with Roumania, a circumstance which would mean Roumania's final subjugation. Such a common frontier with Roumania would practically have settled the question of Balkan hegemony, because Nazi Germany already had common frontiers with Yugoslavia and Hungary, and the effect of this proximity is well known everywhere by this time. The possession of a common frontier with Roumania would have settled the dispute between Germany, Italy, and Russia concerning the Balkans in Germany's favour from the beginning. Further, Nazi Germany would have had a common frontier with Latvia, whose capital had been visited a little while previously by representatives of the German General Staff for the usual "conversations," and the main grain districts of Poland would have been in Nazi hands.



In this situation Soviet Russia had no choice. Once war was inevitable she mobilized, and towards the end of August an acute correspondent reported from Moscow:

"If, however, as seems most unlikely, Poland collapses, Russia might then be confronted with the problem of whether or not to advance into whatever zone of eastern Poland Hitler promised Stalin he would not occupy, so as to discourage, politely, the Germans from reaching the Soviet's present fortified line."

That was not a bad piece of political anticipation. In reality the German troops were even withdrawn from zones in eastern Poland they had already occupied, and in particular from Lemberg, Brest-Litovsk, and Vilna. Lithuania received her old capital back from the hands of Stalin and not from those of Hitler.

There was no great military honour to be won for the Red Army in the venture, but the Soviet Government held a very strong card in that it was in a position to offer the masses of the small peasants and farm-labourers in western Ukrainia and West White-Russia something very valuable to them, namely, the land on which they had previously been working for a pittance when it was in the hands of rich Polish landowners, who were naturally highly unpopular with the masses of the people. For this reason it is not at all impossible that the plebiscite figures published by the Soviet authorities for the voting on 23rd October, showing ninety per cent of the population in favour of incorporation in Soviet Russian territory, were materially correct.

### *Chapter Three*

#### COULD POLAND HAVE BEEN SAVED?

##### *The "Blitzkrieg"*

IN the last few months of summer which preceded the outbreak of war in September very much was talked about "a lightning war," but it seems to have been generally believed in Western Europe that such a war could not be waged with any success against Poland. On 29th August the newspaper correspondent we quoted previously wrote: "If, however, as seems most unlikely, Poland collapses . . ." But a week or so later it was possible to speak of such a "collapse." What actually happened to Poland? Was Nazi Germany's strategy so very much superior? Was the armament of the Germans so very much stronger? Or were there any secrets which the world did not know and perhaps does not know even now?

None of these things singly was responsible for Poland's defeat, but all of them together.

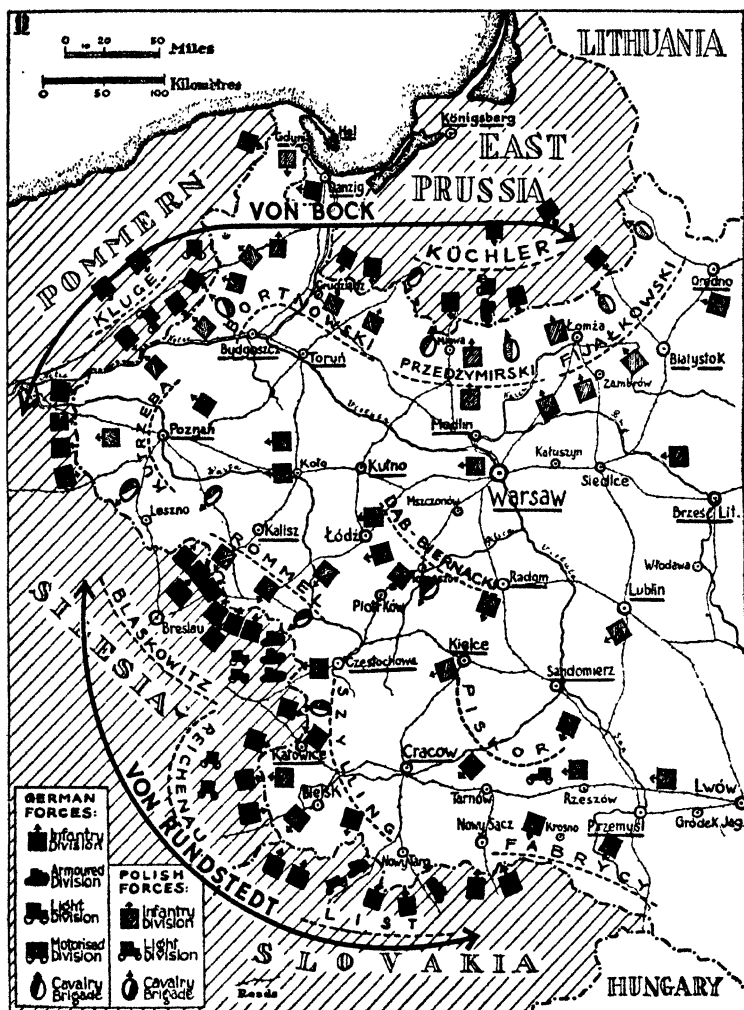
Let us consider Nazi Germany's military strategy. There can be little doubt about its nature, because the methods adopted by the German General Staff could have been worked out many months previously with almost photographic accuracy from Germany's various military publications, and put together into a composite picture of what actually happened in Poland. An expert glance at the map of Poland is sufficient to show that the geographical situation was ideal for carrying

out an envelopment manoeuvre on the broadest possible scale, and that the terrain offered a classical opportunity for "the one great battle of annihilation" about which Count Schlieffen dreamt even before the World War, and which came to grief so signally in the hands of his successors when they tried to put it into operation against France.

The proper authorities should also have known that military discussion in Germany always centred round this theme. The instrument with which Germany's military leaders hoped to obtain this aim was "relative superiority" at the decisive points. They proposed to "fling themselves at the enemy with all available forces." It was to enable them to do this that the West Wall, or Siegfried Line, was built in the first place. It was not built in order to defend Germany against French aggression, but in order to be able to settle matters in the east without interference, and then to turn on the enemy in the west, once again "with all available forces," when the time became ripe. Count Schlieffen's book *Cannae*, the classical German authority on annihilation strategy, declares expressly:

"The enemy front is not the objective of the main attack, and it is not for a frontal attack that masses of troops must be concentrated and reserves mobilized. The great thing is to overwhelm the flanks. The process of annihilation must then be completed by an attack against the enemy's rear."

It was possible to get at the rear of the Polish front from East Prussia and from the south, from Silesia and Slovakia. These were the points at which the decisive blows had to be launched, and, in fact, it was from these points that they were



POSITION OF GERMAN AND POLISH ARMIES ON 1ST SEPTEMBER.

[By courtesy of "Free Europe."

launched. The Germans avoided pitched battles on a frontal scale, and concentrated on overwhelming the Polish flanks. They succeeded in doing this, got at the enemy's rear, and the war was won.

No. 2 of *Free Europe* (Central and East European Affairs, London) publishes a map showing the location of Poland's military forces at the outbreak of war. From this we can see that they were stationed in a great arc round Poland's western frontiers, and that the whole area to the east was unprotected. It is clear therefore that a German break-through on either flank must immediately lay bare the Polish rear. The connecting line between East Prussia and Slovakia was denuded of troops.

This was the shortest front. There were no more dangerous flanks to be defended, and the big fortresses were in this area, at least in the north. An unbeaten Polish Army could have taken up this defensive line and would have been able to wait for assistance from the west. Of course, the greater part of the country would have had to be abandoned to the enemy—the most important part of the country in fact—but it proved untenable in any case, and at least the Poles would have saved their army and its equipment intact. They would perhaps have had the possibility of taking the offensive themselves, and at least they could have held large enemy forces engaged. The fate of Poland would in any case never have been decided on Polish territory, but in the west. According to German reports the Polish High Command had prepared offensive thrusts against East Prussia, Pomerania, and the Silesian industrial

district, but it is possible that these reports were spread in order to cover up Nazi Germany's own intentions, and considerable German forces were stationed at these points.

If the Polish High Command had decided to man the shorter line it might even have undertaken offensives against Germany's flanking forces so that the Germans would have been weakened, to some extent at least, even before they made their main assault against the Polish defensive line. Why the Polish High Command did not adopt this obvious plan is not yet clear, though it would appear that the Poles over-estimated their own strength and under-estimated that of their enemies. Apparently they thought they could hold up the German armies, or at least fight a successful delaying action which would permit them to fall back comparatively slowly. They do not seem to have appreciated the terrible danger of envelopment which threatened them.

The former Warsaw correspondent of the *Basler Nachrichten* writes as follows on 3rd January from Bucharest:

"The almost incredible neglect on the military field was closely connected with the foreign and domestic political errors of the Polish regime. . . . Whatever field of preparations one cares to choose, armaments, motorization, anti-aircraft defence, transport, civil air-raid precautions, the air arm, or the anti-espionage system, one is faced with such a plethora of mistakes, neglect, inefficiency, and weaknesses that one wonders whether the men responsible for Poland's military defence did anything at all that was necessary."

The Polish infantry felt itself helpless against the German air arm. With tremendous courage, armed only with rifles, they fought against tanks, and they were mown down. Many infantry detachments never came into action at all, and the war for them consisted of one headlong retreat. Neither the ambulance services nor the provisioning worked smoothly. The men who were sent to Lemberg for its defence were not reserves, but troops already retreating in face of the advancing enemy.

### *The Report of the German General Staff*

In the last week of September the German General Staff published a report on the operations for the subjugation of Poland entitled *The Eighteen Days' Campaign*. In many respects this report is very illuminating, and we may take it that it is on the whole in accordance with the facts. Later on we shall have to discuss the matter in greater detail, but here we are chiefly interested in what the report says about the intentions of both the Polish and German military leaders. A Polish army was to have operated in the area to the north of Warsaw in order to hold up any German advance from East Prussia. To the east a further strong concentration of forces was to threaten East Prussia itself (Fiyalkovsky on our map), whilst a Corridor army was to seize Danzig, and then proceed against East Prussia. The strongest army was to be concentrated in the Posen area to give the operations against Danzig the necessary support. This army was also to be in a position to strike southward

if necessary and constitute a threat to Upper Silesia.

The Germans seem to have over-estimated the Poles in this respect, because the Polish map shows no such concentrations at the places mentioned, and in the event there were no signs of any such plans. The objective of the German military operations was exactly in accordance with previous German theoretical discussions:

“To envelop the enormous Polish forces concentrated in the great arc of the Vistula, to engage and destroy them.”

To this end two Army Groups were formed, the Army Group South under General von Rundstedt, and the Army Group North under General von Bock. The Army Group South consisted of the armies under the command of Generals von List, von Reichenau, and Blaskovitz, whilst the Army Group North consisted of the armies under the command of General von Kluge and General von Kuechler.

The central army of the Army Group South, under General von Reichenau, was to advance in a north-easterly direction towards the Vistula. The protection of the right flank was entrusted to the army of von List, who, together with the German forces advancing from Slovakia, was to bar the path of the Poles towards the east. It was the task of the army under Blaskovitz to parry the expected flank attack from the Polish forces in the Posen area. It was the task of the Army Group North, together with the army of von Kluge, to establish contact with East Prussia as quickly as possible, whilst the German forces from East



Prussia were instructed to advance in their direction to facilitate the task. The army of General von Kuechler was to advance from East Prussia to establish contact with the army of General von Reichenau over the Narev and the Bug to the east of the Vistula and at the same time cut off Warsaw from the east.

In reality the Germans were attempting a double envelopment. Before Warsaw the Polish forces in the Posen area were to be enveloped, and the remainder of the Polish army was to be enveloped behind Warsaw. Two strong air armies under the command of Air Generals Kesselring and Loehr were told off to co-operate with the land forces. The naval forces engaged were under the command of Admiral Albrecht.

"In the closest possible co-operation with the land forces the air armies must attack enemy batteries, positions, concentrations, transports, etc., using fighters, bombers, and dive bombers in ceaseless action."

According to the German report they did this very successfully, and at the same time they completely defeated the Polish Air Force and established unchallenged mastery in the air. Germany's Armoured Divisions were under the command of General Guderian. Cavalry and artillery forces are not specially mentioned in the report, and that may be taken as an indication of the great value attached to the air arm.

From other German publications we learn that the two air armies engaged in the Polish campaign were "Air Army I," under Kesselring, and "Air Army IV," under Loehr. The suggestion here

is obviously that Nazi Germany has at least two other so-called air armies at her disposal, if not more; though no doubt the other armies (presumably one on the Western Front and the other along the coast) were considerably smaller than those engaged in Poland.

There is no special mention in the report of Goering's friend and close collaborator Lieutenant-General Milch, who was apparently engaged on the Western Front. The commander of the naval forces engaged, Rear-Admiral Schniewind, is also not mentioned. The Chief of the General Staff was General Halder, and the Air Chief of Staff was Major-General Yeshonnek.

All in all we may sum up the tendency of this report by saying that it generously recognizes the courage and heroism of the Polish soldiers, but condemns their leadership as incompetent.

### *Germany's Superiority in Material*

Poland is a poor country. This was certainly the real reason why her military leaders retained large masses of cavalry, and not, as the world was told, on account of the geographical peculiarities of Poland. "The Polish peasant has developed a technique of carefully soaking his matches, and then splitting them into four parts," we said in *Nazi Germany Can't Win* (p. 186), and this fact is enough to tell us what the economic state of Poland was. There were only about one quarter as many motor-cars in the whole of Poland as in Berlin alone. *Polska Zbrojna*, the organ of the Polish General Staff, reckoned that six of the thirty-four

million inhabitants of Poland were unemployed seeing that they were peasants with insufficient land to keep them occupied in its tillage. Polish roads were bad and Polish railways insufficient to satisfy current needs. After the rise of the new State in 1918 the railway network was not reorganized to meet the new requirements. This, of course, was due to lack of capital.

Although cavalry is a backward arm in modern warfare, Poland's cavalry masses might nevertheless have played quite an important role if they had been sufficiently equipped with anti-tank guns. They were not, however, and the gallantry with which they attacked tanks with lances was a heart-breaking waste of brave men's lives, a modern repetition of Don Quixote charging the windmills.

Poland's air arm was hopelessly outnumbered. Immediately on the outbreak of hostilities all Poland's aerodromes were bombed intensely and many planes destroyed in their hangars. The question still remains unanswered how it was that, after ample warning and a long and obviously threatening crisis, Poland's military leaders did not prepare reserve air-fields which could have been used at the last moment. If there was anything which Poland had in sufficient quantity it was space.

Another question was why prompt measures were not taken to obtain reinforcements from Great Britain and France. In the five months from March to August much could have been done, though, as we have already pointed out, the promised credits did not materialize.

To sum up, we can say that almost everything

which should have been done to prepare against the German onslaught was not done, or was not done properly or in sufficient measure.

### *The Problem of Poland's Minorities*

Hitler was not so very far out when he declared that the Polish Government never at any time had more than about fifteen per cent of the population behind it. Poland's national minorities made up about forty per cent of the total population, and they were far from well treated by the Polish Government. There were not only Ukrainians and Byelo-Russians living within Poland's frontiers, but also many Germans, and since 1938 hundreds of thousands of Czechs. In October 1938 the Polish Government took advantage of the position of Czechoslovakia to "free" certain Poles from foreign domination but at the same time it enslaved masses of Czechs. It is difficult to say how many Germans were living on Polish territory, and the estimates vary considerably. Many Germans counted themselves Poles as long as there seemed any advantage to themselves in doing so, but later on, as a result of increasing Nazi aggression, the propaganda and boycott of national socialist elements, and the danger that Nazi Germany would one day seize by force the districts she claimed, caused many of them to remember their "Germanism" once again.

In Czechoslovakia it was not possible to draw conclusions concerning a man's nationality from his name, and the same was true in Poland. It was just as difficult to draw conclusions from the

language. Sons of Germans were often vigorously patriotic Poles or Czechs. Children of Poles were often nationalist Germans. General Blaskovitz, who led the forces which occupied Prague, had a Polish-Slav name, and there was afterwards a rumour that as a Slav he was opposed to the treatment of the Czechs and had fled. This rumour was quite untrue, and his Polish name did not prevent his playing a leading role in the campaign against Poland subsequently. The Slav east of Germany provides, as it happens, quite a large proportion of Germany's generals. The Blaskovitzes, the Moudras, and the Vasilevskis, and all the rest of them with their Polish names, are as staunchly German Nationalist as any Schmidt or Braun.

The situation in Poland was, however, somewhat different. There were national enclaves whose inhabitants had retained their national non-Polish homogeneity, and all attempts at Polonization had failed. These communities were desperately poor. Vast estates sprawled over the countryside and left the poor peasants and their large families with mere allotments for their sustenance. Money is a rarity in such districts, and potatoes, even potato-parings, are the staff of life together with a little meal-soup. It is clear that such peasants could not possibly develop any deep attachment to the Polish State. The Land Reform Bill had not materially changed conditions. Out of 3·25 million peasant holdings only 1·15 million were more than 5 hectares<sup>1</sup> in extent; 2·1 million were less than 5 hectares in extent, and 1·1 million of them were even less than 2 hectares in extent. The members of such peasant

<sup>1</sup> A hectare is rather less than 2·5 acres.—*Tr.*

families needed to work only a few days in the year to till such small parcels of land; in fact, they were practically unemployed. In addition, the population increased annually by between four and five million. Sugar, bacon, and salt were luxuries.

The poorest districts of all were in the east, on the frontier of the Soviet Union, whose own peasants were distinctly better off than they were before 1918, because the large landowners had disappeared and the peasants were no longer ground down by them. This contiguity represented a danger for the Polish State, with its social structure of rich landowners and poverty-stricken peasants, and it is therefore quite understandable that Poland's leaders were very loath to accept Soviet assistance even against Nazi Germany. Quite apart from Soviet assistance, it was in any case not easy to summon up any enthusiasm amongst Poland's land-hungry peasants for war.

### *Working-Class Opposition*

In the industrial districts of Poland there was also widespread opposition to the Government, and for years there had been successful agitation for a boycott of the elections on the ground that they never accurately reflected the will of the people of Poland. Poland is an agricultural country. There are many provinces which hardly have a factory from one end of them to the other. In the big province of Vilna there are three factories, in Novogrodek also three, in Polesia six, and in Volhynia fourteen. In the province of Tarnopol there is only one industrial undertaking of any size. Only in western Poland are there any big industrial

undertakings. There are iron foundries, oil-fields and coal-fields, and other industrial undertakings here, in the former German and Austrian parts of Poland. The workers in these industrial districts were mainly socialist, and they regularly boycotted the pseudo-democratic elections.

There are at least two million Jews in Poland, and probably even three million, and they certainly did not support the Government. Jewish students were excluded from the general educational system. Hospitals often refused to take Jewish patients. Anti-semitic riots were a common and frequent occurrence. All in all, therefore, it is rather difficult to see on what mass support the Polish Government could rely.

Even the actual basis of the Polish Government, the "Legionaries," were divided amongst themselves. It is clear that mere membership of the various Legions formed during the World War could not offer the Government a sufficient basis for homogeneous political support. With national minorities totalling thirty per cent of the population (according to official figures based on language, but in reality forty per cent of the population) and feeling themselves badly treated by the Government, with a working-class definitely left-wing in politics and vigorously opposed to the dictatorship, with between two and three million Jews, at least a million Germans organized from abroad whether they liked it or not, and 25,000 Lithuanians whose territory was seized by force in 1920, it was difficult to whip up any enthusiasm for war. Even when the actual Poles, oppositional though they were, declared themselves in favour of the defence of the

country against the aggression of Nazi Germany, there were still the national minorities in the east. There were districts in this part of Poland where the actual Polish population amounted to only a few per cent of the total.

Here we have the key to the problem of why the Polish authorities were unwilling to defend themselves in the east. It would have meant abandoning the real Polish areas to the enemy and defending land which, in the main, was not Polish at all. The troops from eastern Poland were unreliable. In the years before the war there was very considerable pro-Soviet agitation in these areas, and there were open processions of peasants shouting "Long live the Soviet Union!" "Long live the People's Front!" and so on, as reported in the official *Gazeta Polska*. The Polish authorities were well aware of the importance of the nationality problem when they founded the new industrial armament centre around Sandomir in 1937. One of the reasons for this choice of situation was that the surrounding population was over ninety per cent Polish. Further, the district lay between the Vistula and the San, thus greatly facilitating its defence.

German newspaper and radio reports also showed the effects of the nationality problem, and according to them the Poles proper had to be separated in the prison camps from other prisoners owing to the fact that nationality differences gave rise to constant friction. Battalions which were composed of at least forty per cent of men who were opposed to the Polish State, and unwilling to give their lives in its defence, could hardly be considered as reliable troops. Such battalions might have held



together in a victorious campaign, but not in a campaign which consisted of almost ceaseless retreat.

Despite all these very real difficulties, it still remains extraordinary that so little was done by the Polish authorities to prepare the country to resist Nazi Germany's aggression. At the beginning of 1938 General Skvarczynski declared in Vilna in a speech of farewell to his division that Poland was threatened by an expansionist tendency from the west, a tendency which for the moment confined itself to economic and propagandistic affairs, but which might very easily take on a territorial character in the near future. At the time the Nazi Press in Germany waxed very indignant at General Skvarczynski's wise foresight.

### *How might Poland have been Defended?*

It is never very difficult to give advice after the event. Thanks to an undemocratic governmental form and to innumerable domestic difficulties Poland was greatly hampered in her decisions. The Polish authorities have waited till now before deciding to solve their main problems, and the way in which they propose to do it is characteristic. In an interview General Sikorski declared significantly: "The Germans have shown us how to deal with population problems. If they can transfer so can we, and on as large a scale." In other words, Poland's present leaders propose not to satisfy the just aspiration of Poland's big national minorities, and to pacify them in the real sense, but to imitate Nazi Germany's methods.

Would it have been possible for the Polish High

Command to concentrate the main body of their troops around the new armament centre, Sandomir? Sandomir was itself a very important centre and it was not so very far removed from the old armament centre in Upper Silesia. It lies between Warsaw, the capital, and the industrial district of Galicia. An army operating from Sandomir could have struck, if it so desired, to the south, where the German forces would have had the not particularly friendly Slovaks in their rear, or towards Silesia, where there are very many Poles and behind whom lie the Czechs. In addition, the German forces advancing to the north could have been attacked in the flank once they had been held on this front. Warsaw could have played the role of a second Madrid to such operations. In any case, the German plan of campaign would have been thrown out of gear. It is true that the Sandomir district lies in a triangle between Slovakia and Silesia, but it is far removed from Nazi Germany's strong centres and armament sources. It was for this reason that the German advance in this area began last of all and proceeded in a rather hesitant fashion.

A further question concerns what might have been done in the west to assist Poland and facilitate her defence; that however belongs to another chapter, dealing with the war in the west, and the point need only be touched upon here. At the beginning of the war Germany was able to use her best troops against Poland. A protracted war on the Eastern Front would have weakened Germany for the subsequent war in the west. A rapid success for her arms on the Eastern Front promised important results far transcending a merely local

significance. In *Nazi Germany Can't Win* we wrote (p. 341):

"Such a preliminary success would do much to improve the morale of Germany's population, and with all these important cards in her hand Nazi Germany could then turn to the Western Powers with peace proposals."

And again (same page):

"The reckless plundering of Poland's supplies, and the exploitation of her industries even to the point of ruination, could provide Germany with raw materials to enable her to sustain a longer war in the west. With the refusal of Germany's peace proposals, which would still further strengthen her moral position, she could invade Belgium, and probably gain new military successes."

The rapid and successful conclusion of the war against Poland has convinced many Germans of the political capacity of Hitler and of the strength of his army. Thanks to the rapid victory over Poland the danger of mass revolt in Germany has receded for a while. The threat to attack the neutral states Holland and Belgium has already come very near to fulfilment, and on one occasion at least the actual date was fixed, 11th November. The threat did not materialize for other reasons. Various questions interdependent on each other played a role here and we shall discuss them in later chapters.

## *Chapter Four*

### THE WAR IN THE WEST

THE best proof, if any were necessary, that there is no hard-and-fast thesis for the waging of wars is afforded by the striking difference between the war in the east and the war in the west. The war against Poland was actually waged according to all the rules drawn up by military theoreticians, particularly in the dictatorially ruled countries, in the years after the World War. It was really a "lightning war" which could hardly have been improved upon even in theory.

On the other hand, the war in the west was, and is, nothing but the type of "positional war" we have all known for twenty-four years, and "on a quiet sector of the front" at that. Powerful armies lie opposite each other in inactivity, and their potential strength is increased by the fact that the actual length of front on which hostilities are likely is only about a hundred miles in length. The armies of three great Powers lie facing each other between Luxemburg and the Rhine, all equipped with the last word in modern military technique. In addition, their effective strength per mile of front is greater than any commander could have imagined in his wildest dreams during the World War.

In 1914 Germany entered the war in a much better strategical situation than she enjoys to-day. Everywhere her armies were already over the Rhine before hostilities began, because before the

World War Alsace-Lorraine belonged to her. In addition, Great Britain was so ill prepared for modern warfare that the German commanders regarded action against the small British Army as more of a police operation than anything else. In 1914 Hohenzollern Germany hurled great masses of troops across Belgium and northern France, and in the very first month of the war German cavalry patrols actually reached the outer suburbs of Paris.

To-day the situation is very different. The preliminary phase of the World War, the phase of movement, has not been fought at all. The war has been positional from the beginning. It has begun with the "dead phase" the Germans feared so much and had determined to avoid under all circumstances. General Erfurth concludes his book *Die Ueberraschung im Kriege* (*The Element of Surprise in Warfare*) with the following words:

"Writers dealing with the prospect of a new European war repeatedly express the hope that it will take a different course and adopt a different style from that of the World War. It must never again come, they insist, to a positional war dragging on for years. There is no doubt that the dependence of modern warfare on the ceaseless supply of vast masses of material demands that it should find some speedy end. Economic factors may threaten to make it impossible to continue waging a war. How can one side force a rapid end to a war? Obviously only if it can fight and win decisive victories rapidly. Military experts hope that the new weapons available will make rapid and decisive blows possible. There is no doubt that such

weapons will open up great possibilities to any High Command which makes proper use of them. However, the preliminary condition is that a solution of modern warfare waged with armies totalling millions of men should be sought to a much greater extent in operational strategy than was the case during the World War. It is only movement which can achieve surprise, and surprise then leads to further movement. The preliminary condition for success in the field lies in concealing one's own intentions and taking the enemy by surprise. Good fortune and the skill of the High Command must unite to do this completely. In war the unexpected usually has the happiest success. In this way surprise becomes the arcanum of victory."

If that was Hitler's recipe for victory in his war against the Western Powers, then he has certainly lost the first phase of the war no less signally than the Allied Powers lost it in 1914. Poland was nothing but an episode in the war, and the final decision will fall elsewhere. To take the enemy by surprise means to take the initiative against him. The surprise in the west was exclusively for Hitler and his generals, and it was not a pleasant one. To take the initiative means to proceed according to one's own plans and to force the enemy to adapt his actions to one's own. Hitler's generals would have liked to wage a short, sharp struggle, and to avoid positional warfare by throwing a vast weight of modern armaments into the scale. Things turned out differently in the west. From the beginning Hitler did not get a chance of taking the initiative, despite the fact that he tried often enough

to take it. The question for us is how did this situation come about and how was Hitler outplayed.

*What are Hitler's Intentions in the West?*

Perhaps it would be better to ask: what *were* Hitler's intentions in the west? because things have developed very differently from what he wished. The General Staff of an army must be prepared for all possible eventualities with which it might be faced. It may have to take the offensive and it may have to ward off the offensive of an enemy—*i.e.* attack or defend. It is therefore quite impossible to decide from mere reports of what a General Staff intends, or from speculations as to what a General Staff might do, what will actually happen when war does break out.

The German General Staff is known to have drawn up very detailed plans designed to give it victory even against powerful fortifications. These plans can be readily reconstructed from the detailed discussions which have taken place in recent years in Nazi Germany's military Press. However, the ultimate die is cast not by the Chief of the General Staff but by the politician. It is he who has to decide whether the General Staff shall wage a war of defence or offence, and he decides this not on the basis of the given military situation alone, as a general would, but in conjunction with the given political and economic situation.

Now the given political and economic situation of Nazi Germany was so precarious that it was necessary to avoid a large-scale war under almost any circumstances. On the other hand, a minor

war against Poland was more than welcome, providing that it could be concluded successfully without its leading to a first-class war in the west. These were the tactics Hitler had been pursuing for years with some measure of success, and he revealed them clearly in his letter of 27th August to Daladier:

“Whatever may be said against my methods, whatever objections to them may be brought forward, at least one must not overlook or seek to deny the fact that with their aid I have made it possible to find solutions without bloodshed which were satisfactory to Germany and which in many cases at the same time relieved the statesmen of other countries from the necessity of taking the responsibility towards their peoples for this revision [of the Versailles Treaty], a thing which would often have proved impossible for them.”

Thus, on his own admission, Hitler had quite deliberately pursued the method of the *fait accompli* for years. Once the Rhineland was occupied by German troops it was difficult for the Western Powers to take any effective measures against it short of open war, and the same was true of the seizure of Austria. And then again, were the Western Powers likely to plunge the world into war just because a few million Germans were forcibly incorporated into the Reich whether they wanted it or not, a point which is not satisfactorily settled even now? At the time of the Sudeten crisis a sort of *Anschluss* had already been established when the Munich solution was found. When the German armies marched against Prague the Austrian recipe was used again. Hitler calculated



that the statesmen of Western Europe would be grateful to him for making it easy for them to accept annexations without the disagreeable necessity of taking the responsibility for them, and that they would not intervene, and certainly not declare war. He even assumed that they were in agreement with his Central European conquests; and he suggested that it was only his methods they objected to. In his speech to the Reichstag on 6th October he declared:

“When they find it necessary to adopt a hypocritical attitude and to condemn the methods with which I have established an ordered state of affairs in Central Europe I can only say that in the last resort it is the success of a thing which decides its usefulness and not the methods by which it is obtained.”

Here lies Hitler's error, the error he made in assuming that he could conceal to the last moment from the statesmen of Western Europe that he had wider intentions than merely to establish “an ordered state of affairs in Central Europe.” It is not necessary to quote from other sources, the facts are obvious enough. However, if Hitler had been able to maintain the fiction that he had no further aims, then even a war against Poland need not have been necessarily followed by war in the west. He could reckon to avoid it just as he avoided it after the occupation of the Rhineland and after the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

One important change in the justification put forward by Hitler must be noted at this point. Up to the invasion of Czechoslovakia he had always argued that his aim was solely to unite all Germans

under one rule. After the invasion of Czechoslovakia he spoke of the necessity of establishing order in Central Europe. What was to stop his taking still more on his shoulders, namely, the establishment of "an ordered state of affairs" in Europe as a whole? He began his attack on Poland with the same excuse. A further helpful indication as to his intentions was the title chosen for the Nazi Party congress which was to have taken place in September in Nuremberg: "The Congress of Peace." Obviously, after a few weeks' successful war against Poland Hitler wanted to mount the platform at the Nuremberg Congress and proclaim peace to the world. Having defeated Poland, and once again created a *fait accompli*, he felt that war in the west would be as unnecessary as it had been after all his other coups. This time he had miscalculated.

### *Nazi Germany's Peace Offers*

The first peace offer was made in the second week of the war. Goering delivered a speech to the assembled workers of the great Rheinmetall-Borsig Works in Berlin, whose share capital had been in the hands of the Reich for a long time:

"We want peace [he declared], and we are ready for peace. All the moral chatter about attack, violence, and Nazi-ism means nothing to us. The German people have always been for peace. The *Fuehrer* at the head of us has always loved peace, but this must not be confused with weakness, or lead to the belief that we must have peace because we are shivering with fear."

Naturally, the peace offer was accompanied with the usual Nazi threat, though this time it was directed against Great Britain alone: "Mr Chamberlain, you must be convinced that when we compare you with ourselves the comparison is very much in favour of Germany. It is only from the military point of view that it would give me joy to prove that the British also can be severely defeated."

After which he switched back to his peace offer again: "But that is not the question. The question is that our people can work in peace. You accuse Herr Hitler, but no, Mr Chamberlain, it is yourself who is to blame."

Further on in his speech Goering then declared that Hitler and behind him the German people were prepared to conclude an honourable peace with all who did not maltreat Germans. However, they could not permit Germans to be murdered by any little State that felt inclined. And then came a clear indication of Nazi Germany's tactics when Goering declared that the fact that Nazi Germany was prepared to talk of peace was a sign of her strength and her success in the east. In other words, the policy of the *fait accompli* was to be accepted again. Goering also revealed very clearly something which up to then was to be seen only in Nazi Germany's military theoretical literature, namely, her gnawing fear that she might once again have to wage a war on two fronts.

As early as 1871, immediately after the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War, von Moltke the elder declared in a memorandum:

"We must not hope to rid ourselves of one of our

enemies quickly by a rapid and successful offensive against the west, and then be able to turn in force against the other."

From this conclusion of Moltke developed the plan to settle accounts with the enemy in the east first, and then to turn in force against the west. For a long time this idea was pigeonholed in favour of the west variant, but in 1933 it was again brought forward and developed by Nazi Germany's military experts. The possibilities which might have resulted from the adoption of this plan during the World War were carefully studied, and in his book *Bündniskrieg (War in Alliance)* General Wetzell writes:

"The concentration of Russian troops in Poland, very considerable even in peace-time, offered the most favourable military conditions for doing this."

Nazi Germany's military experts were not moved by any purely academic interest in putting forward these speculations; they had their eyes on the future, and since then the results of their investigations have been put into practice very effectively. Thanks to this, Goering was able to declare:

"Now that the Poles have been defeated, the threats to Germany's safety on two fronts have ceased. They were always a serious danger to us."

For the rest, Nazi Germany relied on the protection of the "West Wall," before which streams of blood would flow if the British made any attempt to take it by force. All Goering's observations and threats were addressed to Great Britain, and France was not mentioned at all, except towards the close of the speech when he declared:

"We did not want this war. We want nothing

from France. We have guaranteed France's frontiers for ever. If Daladier does not believe us that is his affair. We do not want to shoot Frenchmen dead. We do not want a conquest of the French and British. It is again the British Government which has caused the trouble. We know Great Britain's proverbial intention 'to fight to the last Frenchman.'"

Goering's speech was extremely interesting because it contained everything which makes up the political strategy of Nazi Germany and with which she hopes to win this war: the successful avoidance of a war on two fronts, the invincible protection of the West Wall, the belief that France can be separated from Great Britain, and the hope that not even Great Britain was really willing to fight, and that, in fact, everything was a bluff. At the same time the speech revealed Nazi Germany's fear that she might, after all, be forced to wage a first-class war, just the one thing she had always refused to believe in. Goering also treated the British naval blockade very lightly, declaring that it was impotent because Germany would be able to obtain all the raw materials she required from Soviet Russia. That boast, however, was intended primarily for domestic consumption.

Goering's offer was not accepted, and it was not long before a second offer was made. On 19th September Hitler spoke for the first time since he addressed the Reichstag at the beginning of the war. His speech was more truculent than Goering's, and his threats against Great Britain were wilder. Great Britain's humane conduct of the war to date had been due solely to her fear of Germany's

strength. Still more than Goering he played up the alleged assistance Nazi Germany was to receive from Soviet Russia, and referring to the partitioning of Poland he declared that that should have put an end to all British fears of German expansion in the west once and for all.

"I have no war aims against Great Britain and France," he declared. "I have tried to maintain peace between these countries and mine, and to establish friendly relations between the English and German nations."

But if all that failed he had something terrible and wonderful up his sleeve, a "secret weapon," one which could not possibly be used against Germany in return. His love for humanity made him hope that he would never be compelled to use it, but if he did . . .

Even that failed to work, and the Western Powers refused to come to heel. However, Nazi Germany's leaders still did not abandon all hope, and on 26th September the Berlin correspondent of the well-informed *Baseler Nationalzeitung* reported that great preparations were under way in Berlin to launch a new peace offensive in the hope of warding off a real European war even at the last moment. Hitler, it was reported, now realized that Great Britain and France were determined, but he intended to make a new effort to convince them that Soviet intervention had fundamentally altered the European situation. And then came a very familiar note: any effective naval blockade would cause the danger of red revolution to develop in Germany again. Hitler, it was reported, was placing much reliance on this argument, particularly with Great

Britain's statesmen, with whom it had already proved so successful.

This report, which summarized material given to foreign correspondents in Germany, was perhaps put forward as a *ballon d'essai* in the hope that it would produce some sort of favourable reaction on the other side. Nothing happened, and so heavy artillery in the shape of Hitler himself had to be brought up. This was the speech in which he summed up the military campaign in Poland, and it is particularly interesting because it contained more than that, and more even than Goering's speech. Once again Hitler spoke in honeyed tones, though the German wireless was already spitting gall and fury at the time. Once again he presented himself as the true friend of peace, and offered to act as honest broker in his own affairs.

France was again assured that with the return of the Saar district all claims against her had been liquidated, and that no further claims would ever be raised again in the future. Hitler then claimed to have done everything possible to abolish the old idea of any hereditary enmity between the two countries, and—"To put in its place a respect for the great achievements of the French people, and for their history; the great respect every German soldier feels for the French Army and its achievements."

This is the man whose self-written bible still contains, amongst many hateful passages of a like nature, the statement: "And finally we must realize quite clearly that France is and will always remain the merciless and deadly enemy of the German people."

Right up to the outbreak of war, when the shortage of paper (and the new-found friendship for Soviet Russia) prevented it, a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was solemnly presented to schoolchildren as a very special prize, and to all newly-married couples throughout Germany. Hitler also declared in his speech: "On the contrary, instead of demands on France I have always expressed my wish that the old enmity between the two nations should be buried for ever, and that with their great historical pasts they should find the way to each other."

If Hitler "always" felt that way, as he says, it is difficult to know how he ever managed to write *Mein Kampf*. However, he did write it, and to the utter confusion of his subsequent pleas it has found observant readers in France.

It was then Great Britain's turn for the honey-pot: "I still believe that there can be a real pacification of Europe and the world only if Germany and Great Britain come to a lasting agreement."

Moved by this conviction he had often trod the path towards agreement, and the fact that his efforts had been without success was no reproach to him.

However, he realized that it was necessary to do something more than indulge in fine-sounding phrases if this new offer was to have any hope of success, and he therefore had to make some attempt to offer a basis on which a real peace conference could take place between the belligerent Powers. In consequence he made one or two rather more definite proposals, though they were very conditional and very loosely phrased. For instance, he



proposed a general solution of the problem of national minorities, the problem which he had just rendered still more complicated by incorporating a national minority about twenty millions strong into the German Reich. He offered to set up a new Polish State, but as it had already been announced that German minorities from other areas were to be settled on Polish territory it was clear that the new Poland was to be squeezed together on territory chosen by Nazi Germany.

He also raised the colonial question and put forward Germany's claim to colonies, but here too his proposals were suspiciously ambiguous. He demanded "primarily" the return of Germany's former colonies, and over and above that "colonial possessions appropriate to the position of the Reich." Anyone acquainted with Hitler's phraseology will recognize at once that these "appropriate" colonial possessions would be very considerably in excess of Germany's colonial possessions before the World War.

He proposed that a conference should meet and draw up a statute which would give all nations a firm feeling of security and thus lay the basis of real peace in the world. He appealed not only to the actual belligerents but also, and in particular, to the neutral countries, who were now expected to take the initiative and help to drag Hitler's chariot out of the mud.

In conclusion, Germany would, of course, be victorious. There would be no two victors, though there might be two vanquished, and therefore: "Let those peoples and their leaders speak who feel as we do, and let those reject my out-

stretched hand who feel that war can offer a better solution."

Then he gave thanks to Providence for all His great mercies to the German people, and hoped not only for Germany but for Europe as a whole "the great blessing of peace."

The man who had let loose the dogs of war without warning was now anxious to kennel them and say no more about the matter now that he had got what he wanted. All that remained was that the other Powers in Europe should sanction his conquests.

### *The New Fortress Strategy*

The biggest struggles which have taken place on the Western Front in this war were all carried out in a comparatively small space, and bigger units than companies were very seldom in action. The sum-total of loss or gain was hardly of a strategic—*i.e.* of a decisive—character even allowing for the smaller scale of activities, but chiefly of a tactical nature, representing minor improvements of position along the front.

If we take tactics to be the execution of great strategic plans, as the sum of local and current individual tasks, then, of course, behind all these minor actions there might be some bigger idea to be carried into execution one day, together with new and bigger attacks. Such an idea on the part of the Western Powers might have been a big operation with a view to breaching the West Wall, or, on the German side, an attempt to break through the Maginot Line, such as was seriously expected at one time. Any such attempt from either side is

however unlikely now. As early as 28th October 1938 the German military theoretical organ, the *Militärwochenblatt*, declared quite frankly that there seemed no prospect of success for any frontal attack on the Maginot Line.

A series of manœuvres and inspections, with accompanying speeches, organized by the German High Command and reported at great length in the Press, were intended to make it quite clear to the French High Command that an attack on the West Wall had much the same prospects, and that it was invincible although it was of later date than the Maginot Line. It was May 1938 before work began on the Siegfried Line, but the plans for it had already been prepared long before by the German General Staff, and Nazi Germany's leading building expert, Todt, then began operations with several hundred thousand workers under his command.

Although the Siegfried Line was built hastily there is no doubt that it represents a most formidable hindrance to any attempt at invasion, and it would require very powerful forces even to attempt a breach. Both defensive lines are now serving the same purpose though originally the idea behind them was different. In the beginning the Maginot Line was really a line, one uninterrupted position extending from one point to another and as far as possible with direct communication throughout, the whole fortified according to the last word in modern technique. The West Wall, or as it is more popularly called, both here and in Germany, the Siegfried Line, is more a fortified zone than a fortified line. It represents a depth of countryside

honeycombed with machine-gun strong posts, artillery positions, infantry quarters, and tank hindrances. The exact position of the Siegfried Line is difficult to discover, but it is clear that an enemy who broke into the zone at any point would find himself under flanking fire from all sides. There could be no question of a breach until the defenders had completely evacuated a great area both in length and depth, and even then the attacking forces would probably find themselves faced with a new and similarly fortified zone. The objective of the attack would be reached only when the defending forces had been so worn down that they were no longer in a position, or no longer willing, to defend their new positions with success.

The Maginot Line, on the other hand, was conceived as a real line, a line which should be so strong that any breach by the enemy at any point would be impossible altogether. The subterranean tunnels, munition stores, power stations, and infantry quarters, etc., have been made familiar to the general public in a number of films and in the Press. The difference between the two systems can best be illustrated by a visit paid by the Press to the Siegfried Line in the summer of 1939. The members of the party were taken to the summit of a hill overlooking part of the line. Before them lay an undulating countryside dotted with woods. There was nothing in particular to attract the attention in this landscape until suddenly billows of smoke began to rise from various points, revealing the location of the fortified positions. The billows of smoke were of different colours to show the varied nature and purposes of the positions

their presence indicated. The smoke showed, in fact, that the Siegfried Line was no line at all, but a fortified zone. A similar demonstration carried out in any part of the Maginot Line would show far more clearly the contours of a real line.

However, we may assume that the differences in construction between the two lines are gradually disappearing. It is reported that in the meantime further "lines" have been built behind the Maginot Line, whilst in front of it the usual advanced positions have been constructed. It is clear that the longer these positions are occupied the more heavily fortified they will become. Thus to-day the Maginot Line will represent an "armed zone" to a greater extent than it did originally, whilst on the other hand, the "West Wall" is being ceaselessly consolidated, and no doubt uninterrupted connections have already been established throughout the main line of defence, so that the Siegfried zone will become more and more a Siegfried Line as well. Behind the Siegfried Line there are further fortifications, some of them erected soon after German troops reoccupied the Rhineland.

The advanced positions in front of the Maginot Line, and, no doubt, those in front of the Siegfried Line too, differ from the positions which existed during the World War, or at least they differ from those of the first years of the World War. During the final years of the World War the advanced positions had a tendency to disintegrate into loosely held points. Advanced posts became more important than the front line. The front-line trenches, which formerly played such an important role, were often very thinly held, and to an increasing

extent they began to develop into communication-ways between otherwise more or less isolated advanced posts. The reasons for this were the development of tank attack and the increasing severity of artillery bombardment, both of which had made it much easier for attacking infantry to overwhelm front-line trenches. Advancing infantry met with real resistance only from the second-line trenches, or, at least, from positions which lay considerably behind the front-line trench system.

The advanced-post system of the Maginot Line is also differently organized, and the customs of the last war have been abandoned. The powerful Maginot Line itself makes it unnecessary to build any proper intercommunicating system of trenches in the advanced area in front of it. The individual advanced posts are sometimes as far apart as a mile. The actual task of defence devolves on the Maginot Line itself, and all the advanced posts have to do is to keep a watchful eye on the terrain in front of it. To-day therefore we can no longer say that the belligerent lines are such-and-such a distance apart from each other. During the World War each side got as near as it reasonably could to the enemy. Sometimes the distance between the front-line trenches was only a few yards, and wire-netting had to be put up to guard against unexpected hand-grenade attacks. To-day the advanced positions represent little forts in themselves. They are surrounded by carefully laid barbed-wire entanglements, and occupied by men of various arms.

The very fact that the garrison of the Maginot Line is entrusted with the manning of the advanced

posts in the forward area is sufficient indication that the Line itself is the main defence. Towards the end of 1939 the *Petit Parisien* wrote that the garrison sent forward a battalion per sector for advanced-post work. This battalion then sent forward a company still deeper into the terrain, that company sent forward a platoon, and the platoon then sent forward patrols. The smallest posts were connected by telephone with each other, and to the rear with the company, which in its turn was in telephonic communication with the battalion and that in its turn with the main line. In the event of a strong enemy attack the outposts retire to the next posts behind them, and so on.

An interesting feature of the advanced-post work is the formation of volunteer corps. These men are used for particularly dangerous work—raids, and so on—and they are transported by lorry to the point from which their operations begin. The idea is of course not new. At least the German Army had its "Storm Battalions" in the World War. The members of these battalions were given similarly dangerous tasks, and they were prepared for them behind the front line without fear of enemy interruption. When they were considered sufficiently versed in their tasks they went forward to carry them out. In the French Army these volunteer corps are apparently not completely segregated from their original units as the German Storm Battalions were.

The wide area in front of the line and the careful watch kept on it prevent any large-scale surprise manœuvres on the part of the enemy. In such carefully guarded terrain the tactics developed in

theory by General von Eimannsberger, Germany's foremost tank expert, for a sudden and overwhelming thrust without previous artillery preparation are quite impossible. New defensive tactics have arisen in answer to the new form of attack designed to give the defence no time to develop its full potentialities. Eimannsberger's ideas were based on a comparatively small stretch of land between the two lines, somewhere between 500 and 1000 yards. To-day on the Western Front the distance is a matter of miles.

Thus neither the Maginot Line nor the Siegfried Line is just a stronger kind of trench line such as existed in 1918. New technique has caused a new form of warfare to develop, and in consequence the very best tactics based on the old trench system are utterly useless to-day. All that Germany's military theoreticians had prepared for was the possibility that having broken through the first line of defence they would find themselves up against a second. To-day the French have placed their first or preliminary defences in front of their first line.<sup>1</sup> We shall see later that in consequence of this unforeseen development the "modern theory of lightning war" became obsolete long before there was any chance of trying it out in practice.

Between the two "Lines" to-day there is a stretch of land varying in depth between five and fifteen miles, and it is this area which has been the arena of hostilities since last September. Each side is striving to command as much of this belt as possible and to confine the enemy to the narrowest possible area—*i.e.* to get as close to the enemy as possible.

<sup>1</sup> See *Nazi Germany Can't Win*, p. 244.



This activity on both sides makes any surprise operations on a big scale impossible, but it gives great scope to minor undertakings, such as raids into the enemy positions by patrols of varying strengths.

### *The French Thrust*

At the beginning of the war there was a big difference in the attitude of the two forces. Nazi Germany still had her hands full in the east. In accordance with the axiom of her military theorists that the enemy should be attacked "with all available forces," she had concentrated the main weight of her troops in the east for the waging of "a lightning war" against Poland. In the west the German Army was content to defend its positions. Of course, patrols were sent forward to the French frontier, but no real efforts were made to win back any of the ground lost when the French advanced. Obstacles were erected to hamper the French advance, mines were laid, machine-gun posts established, etc., in order to cause the enemy as many losses as possible. But when the pressure became too strong for the troops on the spot they retired.

In this way the French gradually occupied practically all the belt between the two lines up to the first German fortified positions. A certain amount of fighting took place, and tanks, and even heavy artillery, went into action. On 15th September, for instance, the French High Command issued the following communiqué:

"Yesterday French forces launched a new attack on the Western Front on the extreme north of the

common frontier with Germany adjacent to the independent Duchy of Luxemburg. Tanks led the advance and the Germans were forced to evacuate their outposts."

And again:

"A heavy artillery duel was in progress in the region of Saarbruecken, capital of the industrial province of the Saar, which the French troops now menace on three sides. The entire ninety-mile front between the Moselle and the Rhine is now on German soil."

The advance of the French Army towards the German Siegfried Line was the result of a combination of two, or even more, circumstances. It must always be the aim of any commander to establish contact with the enemy, unless, of course, for some special reason it is necessary to avoid contact altogether. One such circumstance would be when the commander felt his forces too weak to sustain a struggle with the enemy. This was the case with Nazi Germany on the Western Front at the beginning of the war because the German Army there had been deliberately reduced in strength. Under the circumstances, the best thing to do was to avoid all contact with the enemy as far as possible. On the other hand, the French had no such reason for avoiding the struggle. They were quite powerful enough to deal with Germany's weakened forces.

Thus the French Army was strong enough to welcome contact with the enemy, and the German Army was not strong enough to put up any really effective resistance if the French forced the issue and imposed battle on them. These were the first

two reasons. The other reasons were of a political nature.

Up to the peace overtures of Goering and Hitler, Nazi Germany did her best to maintain the fiction that there was no war on the Western Front at all, and, in fact, German prisoners were brought in who did not know that a state of war existed at all. That was quite possible, because there had been frontier clashes with killed and wounded on both the Polish and Czech frontiers previously without there having been a war. The German Press had reported the breaking off of relations, and even the existence of "a state of war," but not that war had actually been declared. In addition, Nazi Germany was still anxious to pursue her attempts to separate France from Great Britain. Once it was clear that war had come, and that British and French statesmen had reached the limit of concessions and proposed to call a halt to their repeated surrenders, Germany hoped to convince the French that they were being "used" by the British and that the British were prepared "to fight to the last Frenchman" but no more. The Nazis hoped to engender an atmosphere favourable to peace parleys once the war in the east had been settled and the Soviet trump played out. For them the main blow was not to fall on the Western Front at all. For the French, however, the Western Front was the only spot where they could exert pressure to assist the Poles and compel Nazi Germany to withdraw troops from the Eastern Front to reinforce the threatened Western Front. At least, this was the reason given by the French authorities when they withdrew their troops from

German territory after the end of the war in Poland. It is doubtful whether much success attended the French attempt to relieve the pressure on the Poles, though occasionally it was reported that troops and aeroplanes from the east had been noted on the Western Front. In any case, the war in the east was over so quickly that there was very little time for French pressure to make itself effectively felt.

At no time did French troops actually make contact with the main German defensive line. During the big advance in the middle of September German heavy artillery began to fire from the Siegfried Line, and it was assumed in consequence that the German High Command had come to the conclusion that large-scale hostilities were on the way.

*The "Relief Offensive" for Poland*

When in October the French troops abandoned the ground they had won, and retired to their own territory, the Press generally expressed the opinion that the move was a reasonable and acceptable one because, after all, the whole thrust had been carried out merely in order to relieve pressure on the Poles, and now that that was no longer necessary it was wise to fall back. Now it is not at all certain that this was the real reason for the withdrawal. We have already seen that there were other reasons for the preliminary advance. What reasons were there in favour of a "relief offensive" for Poland?

The first and most obvious reason was that the Poles were clearly in a jam, and quite unable to earn the laurels which had so liberally been bestowed on them in advance. But after the end of

the war in Poland it was reported that only the respite of from four to six weeks had permitted the French to extend their defensive line to the sea in the north, and the British to bring over their new expeditionary force before the German Army could launch any effective action in the west.

That is true enough, but just for that reason every effort should have been made to lengthen the period in which the Poles could still hold out. The longer the war in Poland lasted the bigger would be Germany's losses, and the bigger her expenditure of war materials, and in particular oil. At the same time it would have been made more difficult for Soviet Russia to intervene, which she did with the true statement that Polish resistance had obviously collapsed. A protracted war in Poland would also have had a very important effect on Nazi Germany's domestic morale, which the Nazis were very anxious to improve by a successful lightning war against Poland. The weaker Germany became at the beginning of the war the greater would be the effect of Great Britain's naval blockade.

*Thus there were a number of very good reasons for a Franco-British offensive, and the question arises why no such offensive was launched.*

Was an offensive against the Siegfried Line at all possible? The answer is that the offensive need not have been launched against the Siegfried Line.

The main weapons used by Nazi Germany in her invasion of Poland were the aeroplane and the tank. Both in theory and in practice their effectiveness in action was the result of close co-operation. Without the aeroplane the tank was blind and lost

much of its effect. At the beginning of the war there were hardly any German aeroplanes on the Western Front at all, and when in the first few days of the war a squadron of British bombers paid a surprise visit to Wilhelmshaven and the Kiel Canal they reported that they had met with no opposition from enemy fighters, and that the only plane they saw was of an older type, which quickly made itself scarce.

At the beginning of the war Great Britain and France undoubtedly could have had command of the air. An air offensive launched by their two air forces in conjunction could have struck directly at the most vital centres of the German industrial system. Germany's coal-fields and iron foundries were all to hand, and the industry of Saarbruecken and Neunkirchen could have been put out of commission with ease. A little farther to the north lie the great chemical works in Ludwigshafen and Hoechst-on-Main. It is true that many chemical products for war purposes are now manufactured in other parts of Germany, but these two centres still retain very considerable importance. In addition, a very high percentage of Nazi Germany's war production is concentrated in the Ruhr district, which is not too far away to be attacked successfully.

A tremendous amount of damage could have been done by well-planned bombing raids, because Nazi Germany's industrial production is so scientifically organized that one factory and one department of a factory is more dependent on the others, and vice versa, than ever before. To damage or destroy one factory or one department of a factory would result in serious dislocation

for much greater sections. Further, the railway network in the Ruhr and Rhine industrial districts is so closely meshed that the bombs would have found easy targets. Then there is the great Central Canal (Mittellandkanal), which carries coal from Central Germany to Berlin to relieve congestion on the overtaxed railways, and the Dortmund-Ems Canal, which brings iron and other raw materials to the Ruhr industrial district, and finished goods from the Ruhr to North Germany, or through branch canals to the Rhine—*i.e.* to Holland.

In many places this Dortmund-Ems Canal does not flow at its natural level but is taken above the ordinary land-level between artificial dams. One or two direct hits with heavy bombs would cause widespread inundation, and probably put the canal out of action altogether until the necessary repairs could be made. Near Dortmund, with its important coal and iron industry, is the great Henrichsburg elevator for ships, where all vessels must collect in a great trough, not an ordinary sluice lock, and be raised or lowered about ten yards. The successful bombing of this important objective would do damage that would take months to repair. In the meantime Germany's industry would be greatly hampered.

The Krupp Works in Essen are so big and widespread that they would be difficult to miss, and the same is true of the big Rheinmetall-Borsig Works in Duisberg, and scores of other works. The important bridges over the Rhine also present very good objectives for determined bombers. The destructive effects of bomb-

ing have often been exaggerated, but the fact remains that well-aimed bombs can do a great deal of damage. In any case, there is no doubt whatever that a big air offensive of this kind launched by the Allied Powers at the beginning of the war would have compelled the German High Command to bring back large numbers of aeroplanes from the Polish front. It is true that most of the machines brought back in this fashion would have been fighters and not bombers, but at least the small Polish Air Force would have had a better chance in its unequal fight. A feeling of inferiority, particularly in the air, exercises a very deleterious effect on the morale of men on the defensive, and much could have been done to counter this feeling and hearten the Poles in their struggle.

Such an Allied air offensive would have had an even more important effect in fact. The workers of western Germany are traditionally oppositional, more so than those in other parts of Germany. It was the workers of western Germany who fought hardest against the Kapp Putsch in 1920. At the moment they are being so closely watched that they can hardly move a muscle, but they are awaiting their opportunity. Such an opportunity for oppositional action would be attack from the air. In such moments sabotage can be even more effective than usual. When air attack is threatened it is possible to work more slowly than ever and to cause dislocation in production. Anti-war propaganda can have a real effect only when the country begins to suffer from the effects of war, not before.



Now it is perfectly true that air attacks in Spain, and perhaps even in Poland, had the effect of increasing the resistance to the side which carried out the bombings, but that was because they were the acts of enemies. For the oppositional worker of western Germany, however, the Allied bombing plane is not the real enemy at all. His real enemy is Hitler and the Nazi regime, and it is against the Nazi regime that the Allied bomber is also operating.

At the same time the closest meshed railway system in the world, which is situated in this area, is also the basis for military operations against Holland and Belgium. These two countries have already been seriously threatened, and if they were invaded and reduced this would not only turn the Maginot Line effectively, but also bring Great Britain appreciably nearer Nazi Germany's bombing bases, and, in particular, within range of the Nazi fighter planes, which could then protect the bombers.

This important offensive, which would also have relieved Poland, was not carried out. Why it was not carried out we shall probably know only after the war. Perhaps the authorities responsible did not realize the full effect such an offensive might have had. Perhaps they were afraid of Nazi reprisals, and thought it best to let their own industry work at full blast without the danger of German bombing interference. As a matter of fact Nazi reprisals could not have been carried out until later, and the more vigorous the offensive had been the later the reprisals would have come. For under such circumstances the war against Poland would have

taken longer and Nazi Germany would have needed every available bomber on the Eastern Front.

Nevertheless, the question of reprisals certainly seems to have played a role in deciding the plans of the Allies, because even the German factories in and around Saarbruecken, which were well within French artillery range, were not bombarded. The newspapers reported that even when Saarbruecken was hemmed in on three sides by the French whole train-loads of coal were still being transported out of the pincers without interference. The correspondent of the Amsterdam *Telegraaf* reported on 28th September:

"From the main stations in the town about 200 trains are leaving daily loaded with coal and the belongings of the evacuated population."

For weeks Saarbruecken was reported to be practically surrounded. The road from Saarbruecken to Zweibruecken was cut at three points. Saarlouis was threatened, and so was the important industrial town of Voelklingen. There is no doubt that vigorous action on the part of the French could have put the whole industry of the Saar district out of commission, and thus counter-acted Nazi Germany's gains in Poland.

Poland as a whole produces about the same amount of zinc as the Saar district. The loss of iron imports as a result of Great Britain's naval blockade makes the iron production of the Saar district more important than ever: 7.5 per cent of Germany's total production of coal comes from the Saar. Before the war Poland produced about 23 per cent of the quantities of coal produced in Germany, but to-day it must be very considerably

less. In addition, Poland must have coal herself, and what she could give Germany would be only a part of her own production. Out of her total production of about 28 million tons Poland exported about 9 million tons. The coal production of the Saar district totalled 10 million tons.<sup>1</sup> Thus to deprive Nazi Germany of the Saar production would have meant that her Polish gains would have had to stop up the hole thus created, and her sum-total gain would have been nil.

Poland's production of pig-iron and steel ingots was only between 7 and 9 per cent of Germany's production, and considerably less than that of the Saar district. In addition, the effects of the war must have reduced production considerably. According to the *Neues Tagebuch* of 23rd September 1939 the Saar district produces 13·3 per cent of Germany's steel and 11·5 per cent of her total production of iron.

It is difficult to say why the Allied Powers did not do their utmost to cripple this important centre of Germany's industrial production. The only obvious argument is fear of Nazi reprisals, but even so there is no doubt that Nazi Germany would have been the harder hit, because on account of the blockade she is not in a position to make up for industrial losses by imports. That was also one of the arguments in favour of a minor offensive to drive the French out of the Saar district.

It is possible that the Allied authorities thought that the effect of the British naval blockade would be sufficient to bring Germany to her knees, and

<sup>1</sup> All these figures are for 1935, and since then Germany's industrial production has increased more rapidly than Poland's.—W.N.

were unwilling to devastate her industrial districts, in order to facilitate a reconciliation after the war with a non-Nazi Germany. If this were really the motive then one would have to give the Allied authorities credit for a very far-sighted policy, but one involving very considerable dangers. During the World War it is a fact that certain industrial undertakings situated on German territory, or on territory occupied by German troops, and also industrial undertakings situated on French territory, were deliberately spared from bombardment thanks to the fact that the business relations between the industrialists and financiers on both sides extended even over the trenches.

However, although the opportunity was missed at the beginning of the war, it might arise again at some subsequent stage of hostilities.

### *The Propaganda War*

All previous wars have begun with a mad scramble between the combatants each to get his blow in first and to turn the whole weight of his weapons against his enemies with the least possible loss of time. But this peculiar war, at least as far as Western Europe is concerned, has seen both sides displaying anxiety not to use their weapons more than is absolutely necessary. Great Britain brought a non-lethal weapon into play, and her Air Force began leaflet raids on Nazi Germany. In the first days of the war millions of leaflets containing a translation of the Premier's speech were dropped over Germany, statements to the effect that the Allies were not waging war

against the German people but exclusively against National Socialism, and so on. There is no doubt that these leaflets have had a very considerable effect. The Nazi regime has completely cut off the people of Germany from the outside world in order to prevent their hearing anything but the Nazi version of the war, according to which Great Britain and France, and in particular Great Britain, have wantonly attacked Germany in order to partition her territory and deprive the German people of their new-found Nazi freedom.

A measure of the Nazi fears can be seen in the order issued immediately on the outbreak of the war forbidding all Germans to listen-in to non-German wireless broadcasts, a prohibition which has since been tightened up and extended even to members of the Nazi party and officers and men of the German Army. Naturally, the Nazi authorities were not prepared to admit that they were afraid of the German people learning the truth, and various reasons were advanced to explain the ban. First of all it was pointed out that perhaps some people might not prove to have characters sufficiently staunch to resist the lies of Allied propaganda, and the ban was therefore intended to protect them. Goering, on the other hand, declared that the ban had become necessary because German listeners could not be expected to stand constant abuse of their Leader. Ribbentrop gave another reason: the German authorities had not time to draw up a reply to all the many lies spread by the enemy.

The German public can thus pick out the reason that suits them best, though they might suspect

that the very variety of the explanations offered suggests that the real one is not amongst them. The Nazi authorities know how important it is that only their own propaganda should be heard, particularly now that it is meeting with less and less belief. This is the reason why people who have dared to listen-in to certain foreign stations on the wireless have been harried and prosecuted for years. A part of this campaign was the production of so-called "Popular Receivers," which were launched under a cloak of providing the people with good receivers at a low price, but which in reality were intended to prevent listening-in to foreign broadcasts because these "Popular Receivers" pick up only regional stations.

The British leaflets were therefore a valuable source of information to the German people concerning the real attitude and intentions of the Western Powers. They had only one weakness, namely, that apart from wireless broadcasts they remained the only weapon with which the German people came into contact. The masses of the German people are glad to hear the real opinions of responsible statesmen on the other side, and they regard them as less their enemies than Hitler's. They would, however, like to know what is being done to realize such aims.

I have had practical experience with leaflets in another country — Czechoslovakia. To-day I can talk about it. With a number of friends I proposed to a directly interested quarter that in the event of war leaflet propaganda should be organized. We submitted the material, and it was gladly accepted and extended. It was much

less general in tendency than the British leaflets, much more vigorous and more specialized.

There were leaflets for the men at the front, and special leaflets for the women at home whose men were at the front. There was another leaflet for railwaymen, who, to quote an old saying, "have their hands on the throttle of State." The national peculiarities of the Bavarians and the Saxons, neither of whom are particularly sympathetic to the Nazis, were not forgotten. This material was systematically arranged, and its distribution organized long before the crisis ended with the Munich 'Diktat.'

One thing, however, was certain: it would not have been the only weight the airmen took with them, and the people of Germany would have known that they had the choice of fighting in a murderous and unpopular struggle, or turning their weapons against their real enemy and the enemy of the Czechoslovak peoples, the Nazis.

The dropping of leaflets is always a sensation in war; it was last time. But leaflets can be effective only when accompanied by the grim realities of war. When there are no such effects it creates the impression that the enemy is afraid to attack, and that if one's own Government is so strong that even a well-armed enemy hesitates to try conclusions with it, what chance has an unarmed opposition at home? In the end there is little doubt that people in Germany began to make the same jokes about the leaflets as were being made at the same time in Great Britain. Jokes are all very well, but sometimes they can be fatal. Hitler and Goering have often threatened that for every bomb

that falls on Germany they will drop five in return. It would be a good plan to face them with the necessity, and then to come back and drop more leaflets. In that way they would be more likely to meet with success.

Leaflets are an appeal to revolt no matter how mildly they may be formulated. But it is rather too much to expect the German people to revolt against their Government at a time when it is strongest: when all able-bodied men are under military command, when all arms and ammunition are in Government hands and under the sharpest control, when the Government enjoys a monopoly of propaganda opportunities, and when, for one reason or the other, the foreign enemy prefers not to exercise his full strength. Further, it must not be forgotten that a revolt never takes place in the moment of victory. France suffered a number of minor revolts and mutinies after the failure of the Chemin des Dames offensive, and the German Revolution set in irresistibly only when Germany's armies were already flooding back from the front.

In this war the German revolution will probably take place sooner, but it will never come about unless there is some real threat to the front. The German people have been used to food shortage for years, and the screw can be put on much tighter before any acute danger for the regime need arise, providing that the authorities proceed methodically and are able to provide some reasonable ground for the shortage. The Nazis do that sort of thing superbly well, and leaflets alone are not sufficient to hamper them unduly.



*The German Counter-Thrust—Beating the Air*

After the defeat of the Poles the question naturally arose as to what the German Army was to do next. It is quite possible that the rumours to the effect that, before the war, Hitler had succeeded in convincing his generals that the attack on Poland would not lead to a first-class war in the west were well-founded. Even when the reoccupation of the Rhineland was proposed by Hitler his General Staff had suffered considerable misgivings, so much so in fact that preparations had been made to withdraw the troops at the first sign of real opposition. And again before the proposed seizure of Austria, General von Fritsch, who committed suicide or was murdered in Poland, handed in his resignation, and his example was followed by very many higher officers. At the time of the Sudeten crisis another set of generals and high officers, led by the Chief of the General Staff Beck, disappeared from the scene because they had opposed Hitler's plans.

Was it likely that when a really first-class conflict threatened, the situation in the upper ranks of the German Army would be any different? Yet up to then Hitler had always proved right in his estimate of Allied statesmen, and all those who had opposed him had resigned or been removed from office. It is therefore quite possible that he succeeded in convincing those who remained that there would be no big war as a result of the Polish adventure. Nazi Germany was not prepared for a first-class war, and her generals wished to avoid it under almost all circumstances. Not that they wished to avoid a first-class war altogether; not at

all, because a victorious war was the only way to give Nazi Germany the political, strategic, and economic position they desired for her. Thus the aim of the peace offensive was not to avoid a war altogether, but to avoid it at that moment in order to prepare for it at a more suitable moment in the future.

As we have already seen, Hitler was very anxious to avoid war with France—for the moment. But an offensive against the Maginot Line in the autumn would have meant the concentration of the war almost entirely against France. Such an offensive would have been a very costly business, and it would have meant, in addition, having to cope with the whole weight of the combined British and French Air Forces at a time when Nazi Germany had not yet been able to repair the damage suffered by her air arm during the Polish campaign. For various reasons therefore a big offensive in the west, at least an offensive against the Maginot Line, was out of the question.

There was, however, an important reason for an offensive. The population of Germany had never been told that the enemy was in occupation of German territory all along the line. The fact that Germany was at war in the west at all had hardly been admitted, and the admission, inevitable sooner or later, that French troops were on German territory would have made a very bad impression. The likelihood therefore was the launching of a minor offensive which could afterwards be announced to the German people as a great success. "The enemy driven off German territory everywhere," that was a slogan likely to

be popular. The successful execution of it would have been the first military success in the west to consolidate and extend the military prestige won in the east. The German military authorities would have been prepared to let that cost them a good deal.

Towards the end of September increasing activity was observed behind the German lines and along the front, and this is usually a fairly sure sign of a coming attack. As early as 27th September the military correspondent of the *Temps* wrote:

“There is no doubt that Hitler and his military advisers are contemplating large-scale operations as soon as possible on the Western Front.”

The only thing that was still uncertain was where the great blow was to fall

However, the blow did not fall, and instead the world was regaled with reports of great conferences in Berlin between Hitler and his military advisers. Between 10th and 15th October German patrol activity between the Maginot Line and the Siegfried Line greatly increased. On 19th October it was reported that an important conference had taken place between Hitler; the German Chief of Staff, von Keitel; Goering as Chief Air Marshal, and von Brauchitsch as Commander-in-Chief of the German Army, and that it had been followed by an extended conference with twenty-nine high military leaders. A few days later Nazi Gauleiters and other important Nazi political leaders went into conference too. Various plans seem to have been discussed, and de Kerillis writes as follows in *L'Epoque*:

“Goering proposes an immediate and general

attack on the Maginot Line, which he believes can be forced if Germany is prepared to make the necessary sacrifice in human life. Hess, on the other hand, is said to oppose any big military risk in the west, and in this he is supported by Ribbentrop. Hess proposes a drive against Hungary and Roumania in order to ensure adequate food supplies for Germany. According to this plan Germany would carry on war in the air and at sea against Great Britain and France, harrying the coasts of Great Britain with her planes and hoping to produce defeatism amongst the civil population by the success of her submarine warfare."

Hess's proposals, and particularly the air offensive against Great Britain, represented nothing new. In the end the "big offensive" was not launched. Instead a "minor offensive" took its place, and another blow was prepared which could have been foreseen.

### *The First Attacks*

On 14th October the French launched an attack with tanks near the Luxemburg frontier, and the Germans withdrew their advanced posts. On 16th October, at the same place, German troops launched an attack over a front of about four miles. The fact that the attack extended over only four miles indicates sufficiently that it was not a real attempt to obtain any important successes. On the other hand it represented rather more than the usual patrol skirmishes which had been taking place up to then. A hill known as the Schneeberg, on which there was a French advanced post, was

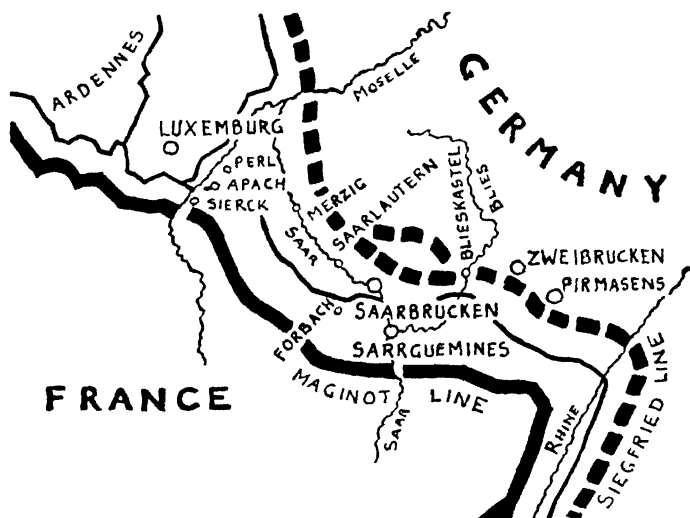
taken, and the German forces advanced into French territory and entered the French village of Apach. In Apach, however, they encountered heavy French artillery fire and were compelled to withdraw.

The significance of the attack was clear. The front was near the frontier, and the situation offered a splendid opportunity to "clear German territory of the enemy." The Moselle and the Luxemburg frontier covered the German right flank, and the Apach sector even represented a sort of indentation in the French lines, so that in the event of any considerable measure of German success the French would have had to withdraw their troops to the east of Apach. In addition, Apach is on a fairly important road which runs along the frontier.

However, the attack might have had another aim at the same time. On the same afternoon a second "offensive" was launched in a different place. To the south of Blieskastel and Zweibruecken German infantry advanced over a front of approximately twenty miles. It was possible that the first thrust was intended as a diversion to draw attention away from the second and larger action.

The length of front in this case, approximately twenty miles, was not unimportant, because "thirty kilometres," or approximately twenty miles, is the length of front accepted in German military literature as requisite for an attack in force as a result of which the enemy line might be rolled up from one end or both, or the attacking troops succeed in getting into the rear of the enemy. There was, however, little chance of that here. But at least the pressure on Saarbruecken could perhaps be lessened, the road from Saarbruecken

to Zweibruecken, which had been cut for a long time, might be restored, and the stretch of land in German hands in front of the West Wall extended again. As the distance from Blieskastel to Zweibruecken is only a little more than five miles the attack must have extended on both sides beyond



these two places, though how far is not mentioned in the report. Twenty miles would be approximately the whole length of front from the road which goes from Pirmasens over the West Wall to Mitsch, to the south where the West Wall forks near Saarbruecken. Further to the east the attack would have had to proceed through woods. The sector from Blieskastel to Saarbruecken must therefore have represented about the centre of the advance.

Six divisions were reported to have taken part in the thrust, but as it turned out later they did not participate at full strength, and it was in reality parts of six divisions which were used. This fact also indicates that the thrust was never intended to be a very serious one.

It is clear that the French did not permit the attack to fall on their farthest outposts, whose only task was to keep the country under observation and prevent the stronger forces behind them from being taken by surprise. The French communiqué announces that the advance posts were withdrawn and that the attack was then beaten back. French troops had "practically" maintained their positions on German territory after the two attacks of 16th October.

A French communiqué, numbered 87, tells us more about the French tactics and informs us that the attack was prepared by violent artillery fire:

"Our light advance troops fell back fighting in accordance with their instructions, but our fire held up the enemy on the prearranged line. In anticipation of this resumption of the German offensive, a fortnight ago the French Command decided to withdraw the French divisions which had taken the offensive on German territory, indirectly to assist the Polish armies, to other positions. The whole of the necessary movements were completed by 3rd October. Thereafter we had only light advance troops and a few supporting units in contact with the enemy."

The German thrust had thus been made into more or less empty space. The Germans appear

to have realized this, and therefore their communiqué says nothing about an offensive at all, and contents itself with reporting laconically that the French had evacuated the greater part of the German territory occupied by them at an earlier stage, and withdrawn beyond their own frontiers.

This was all that was done to support the Poles, and it can have had very little effect, because so rapid a decision in the east was unexpected. The German losses in this abortive thrust are given at between 500 and 1000; not many for an attack on such a broad front, but nevertheless the heaviest suffered by either side since the beginning of the war. The Germans are said to have made very little use of tanks, chiefly, no doubt, due to the fact that the terrain was infested with mines, although it is reported that about twenty were destroyed.

We do not know how far the French forces were actually withdrawn, and the withdrawal no doubt proceeded in stages. On 23rd October a communiqué was issued which clearly reveals the varying opinions of the two High Commands: the French standpoint, a purely military one, and the German standpoint, largely influenced by considerations of "national prestige." The French communiqué reads:

"The French High Command regards the distinction which the Germans are attempting to draw between the political line—the frontier between France and Germany—and the military front as irrelevant. In preparing its line of resistance the French Command has been concerned solely with military considerations and not with geographical



boundaries, which no longer exist in war. However, the Germans have made a great point of keeping to their own territory, and they have expected the French to do the same."

French troops had therefore been withdrawn from every position the Germans might have attacked, for the reasons mentioned. This was particularly the case in the Forest of Warndt, where French troops had advanced up to six miles after 8th September. It had taken the Germans approximately six days to recognize the new fact. The new front now ran more or less along the Franco-German frontiers.

### *Is a Large-Scale Offensive Likely?*

Skirmishes on a smaller or larger scale continued to take place between the advanced troops of both sides, but no further action of any importance was reported. It is, in fact, very unlikely that there will be any big offensive on the part of the Germans against the Maginot Line in this sector, and if the French Army had harboured any big offensive intentions it would never have withdrawn its forces from the positions in which they dominated Saarbruecken, and certainly not from the Forest of Warndt, which would have provided extensive cover for concentrating reserves and tanks. It would also never have permitted the Germans to bombard French villages and small towns behind the lines, which are now within range of the German guns.

If the French Army had harboured the intention of proceeding against the Siegfried Line, even in the same careful and methodical fashion as that

employed on 8th September and after, it need not have abandoned an inch of the ground it had already occupied. The French Army had time enough, and men enough, to build a new line on the other side of the German frontier. This line would have been within reach of the heavy artillery emplacements of the Siegfried Line, but at least it would have offered a big obstacle to any German advance. Trench warfare along the lines of the final phase of the World War might have developed, with heavy losses on both sides, and with each side aiming at wearing down the other by a process of attrition. However, with the lessons of Verdun still fresh in mind the German Army would hardly have liked to see that, and remembering the Battle of the Somme the Allied Powers would scarcely have welcomed it either. The German Army would, however, have had a cogent reason for adopting it, namely, to free German territory of the foreign invader. Where considerations of national prestige are involved the German Army would always be prepared to pay a considerable price to get its way.

The military authorities in Germany are well aware that in Nazi Germany's present situation it would be a very difficult, if not impossible, task to force a breach in the Maginot Line. The military authorities on the Allied side also know that whether it is possible or not to breach the Siegfried Line, it may not be necessary. Thus the military position on the Western Front between the Siegfried Line and the Maginot Line is a stalemate, and neither side is likely to take any serious steps to alter it. The decision in this war will not fall on the

Western Front, and for that reason this war is different from the last.

Both sides have their ideas about how the war is to be prosecuted. Nazi Germany's plan in the first place was not to wage war on the Western Front at all, and therefore she resorted to the first peace overtures. For the moment these overtures have been abandoned because they promised no success, but this does not mean that they will not be taken up again, perhaps in the near future. Hitler proclaimed his possession of "a secret weapon." It seems to have been the magnetic mine. It met with a certain amount of success. If it had met with great success no doubt a new peace approach would have been made. At the moment, however, Ribbentrop is still allowed to say:

"We shall never make peace until there are guarantees that such an attack against the German people is excluded once and for all" (24th October 1939, in Danzig).

Hitler himself has rejected the offer of mediation made by the King of the Belgians and the Queen of the Netherlands (14th November 1939), and in his New Year's speech he proclaimed Nazi Germany's task of freeing herself and the rest of Europe from "British tyranny," of "disarming the war-mongers once and for all, and creating a new Europe under Germany's leadership."

But the *Petit Parisien* then reports from a special correspondent in Italy that preparations for new and far-reaching peace proposals are again under way in Nazi Germany. This time the proposal is that Hitler should content himself with the post of "President," whilst Goering, groomed as a

“moderate,” would become Chancellor. Ribbentrop, Goebbels, Himmler, and Ley would disappear from the scene, and Schacht would reappear from the wings in order to restore some confidence in Germany’s economic system. Poland and Bohemia should once again appear on the map of Europe, as small States under German leadership.

The Nazis are thus aiming at limiting the war to political and diplomatic channels. If the Allied Powers permitted this they would suffer a severe setback and Hitler would once again win a breathing-space in which to recuperate.

Two interesting questions remain. Why did the Western Powers avoid war on land in the west, and what is to be done now that Hitler’s various peace overtures have been rejected?

## *Chapter Five*

### THE THREATENED ATTACK ON HOLLAND AND BELGIUM

“The Belgian General Staff is convinced that a German attack will develop quite unexpectedly from the north” (*Militärwochenblatt*, No. 10, 1936).

#### *The Reasons*

IN an article written immediately after the Munich bomb explosion on 8th November, and referring to the reasons for the affair, I declared :

“They need something to persuade the German population of the abysmal perfidy of Great Britain’s conduct of the war. . . . Germany could then, and perhaps will, demand that Holland and Belgium should open their frontiers to Germany’s forces, or that they should at least permit German planes to fly over their territory. Only under such circumstances will any really effective German air attack on Great Britain be possible. . . . If they refuse, then Nazi Germany will have an excuse to offer her own people and the neutral world for her violation of Belgian and Dutch neutrality.”

The date fixed for the invasion of Holland was 11th November. However, in the end the crisis passed, and Belgium and Holland were saved—for the moment at least.

Just as in the years before the World War, the question of violating the neutrality of Holland and Belgium played a great role in the plans of the German General Staff. It is true that Germany’s

political and military authorities had come to the conclusion that the 1914 violation of Belgium's neutrality was a mistake, but that does not mean that a violation under a different set of circumstances would still be a mistake. In the plans he drew up in 1906, Count Schlieffen provided for a simultaneous invasion of Holland and Belgium. From the military standpoint this was certainly right, but von Moltke rejected the invasion of Holland on the ground that it would stop up Germany's last outlet to the sea.

As it happened, great quantities of material and foodstuffs came into Germany from Holland, and despite the increasing severity of the blockade it proved impossible to stop up this source of supplies altogether. In addition, German goods found their way into the outside world through Holland in spite of the British blockade, and in return Germany secured means of foreign payment which could be disbursed abroad in her interests. Further, the small neutral countries bordering on Germany were a particularly favourable meeting-place for spies, whose activities played no small role in Germany's plans.

During the World War, when Holland's value as a source of supplies began to diminish owing to the increasing severity of the British blockade, the idea of an invasion seems to have been taken up again, and in the spring of 1916 the army of Duke Albrecht von Wurtemberg, which was situated in Flanders, was informed that a state of war existed with Holland, and official notices to this effect were actually posted. In the end the information was cancelled, but it was probably issued in the first

place as the preparation for a blow which was then countermanded.

Now that the British blockade has been imposed in its entirety from the very beginning of the war, and includes German exports under its ban, the importance of Holland as a source of supplies and as a channel for securing means of foreign payment is less than it was at the beginning of the World War. This circumstance would make it easier for Germany to decide on an invasion.

The lightning victory of Nazi Germany in Poland also tended to increase the temptation to invade both Holland and Belgium. Nazi Germany's military experts consider that the violation of Belgian neutrality in 1914 was a mistake purely on utilitarian grounds: Russia was too strong and was in a position to mobilize too quickly—at least, far more quickly than she would have been able to in 1905 when the first plan for the invasion was drawn up. Russia was ready before Germany had finished with France. Russia should therefore have been finished off first, and the attack against France launched afterwards.

This was the theoretical basis on which Nazi Germany's 1939 plans were drawn up. The destruction of Poland was completed in eighteen days, as the Nazi Press triumphantly announced, and it was then time to do something to defeat the enemy in the west. However, for the moment nothing was done, because the Nazis wished first of all to await the results of their peace overtures. When they led to no result the next step was perfectly according to plan: an attempt to subjugate the two small countries, Belgium and Holland,

which lie between Germany on the one hand and Great Britain and France on the other.

The changed situation since 1914, and in particular the development of military technique, had rendered these two countries even more important than they were in 1914. The powerful Maginot Line protected the most exposed sector of the French frontier; Alsace-Lorraine was no longer in Germany's hands as a basis for an invasion of France, and the new air weapon had deprived Great Britain, as Nazi-German publications insisted, of her former island immunity. This last factor was of particular importance in view of the fact that Nazi Germany's plans in the west were chiefly for a powerful air offensive directed primarily against Great Britain. Now Germany's bombers can certainly master the distance between their North-Sea bases and Great Britain, but the fast fighters which could play such a great role in protecting them from enemy air attack cannot fly so far. If Nazi Germany had air bases in Holland the whole situation would be changed.

Further, Nazi Germany's submarines would have a much better chance of doing damage if they could operate from Dutch and Belgian harbours. Zeebrugge and its importance must be still fresh in the minds of Great Britain's naval authorities. It could play a great role in a submarine blockade of the Thames Estuary.

Belgium outflanks the Maginot Line, and that is an important point. The French defences along the Belgian frontier are not, or at least at the beginning of the war were not, by any means as far advanced as those along the Saar and Moselle.

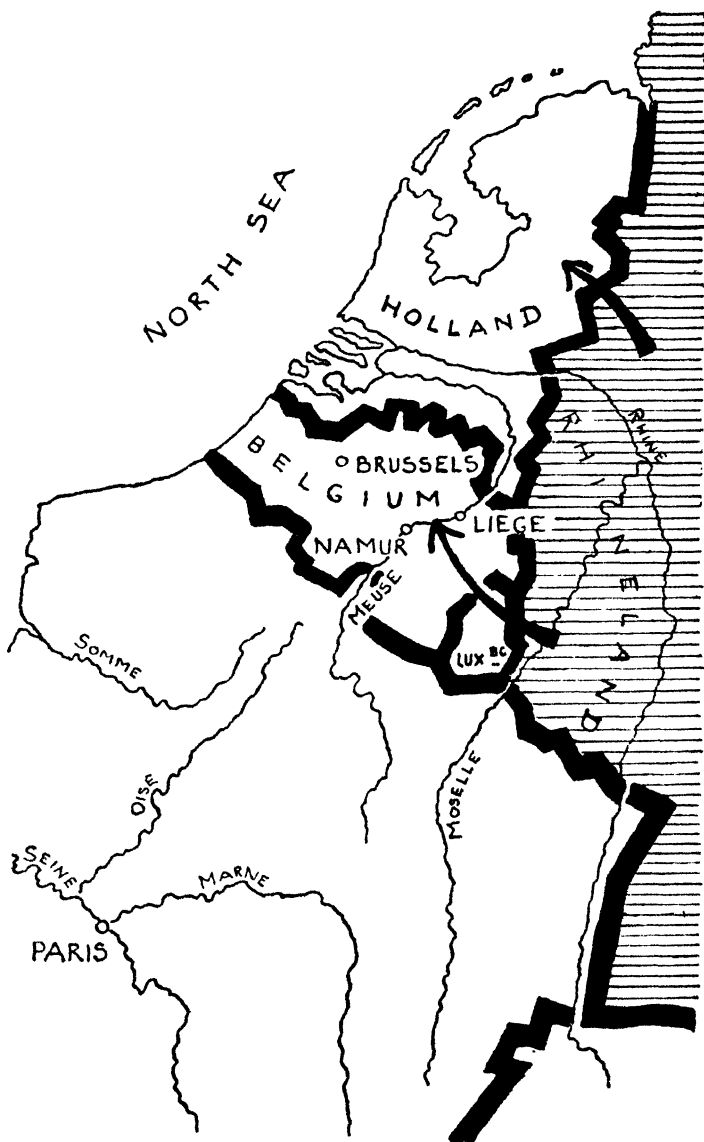


It is one of the great anxieties of Nazi-German strategy to avoid positional warfare and the necessity for subduing heavily fortified positions. Belgium offers a promising terrain for a war of movement. German forces operating there could advance or withdraw at will without any consideration for the destruction caused to the country. The delaying rearguard action with the possibility of a sudden turn to the offensive happens to be one of the new lessons in modern tactics in high favour with Nazi Germany's General Staff.

"According to the lessons of Clausewitz," writes General von Erfurth, "the withdrawal of the German forces to the Siegfried Line [The Siegfried Line of 1917, not the present one] might have found its culmination in a sudden counter-thrust against the advancing enemy carried out by a powerful force taking the enemy by surprise."

Where would it be possible to find better terrain for carrying out such manœuvres than in a Belgium flanked by a Holland occupied by German troops? In the event of such a manœuvre being carried out successfully the retreating French and British troops could be pursued right back, and hurled over the weaker French defences along the Belgian frontier, whereupon the whole Maginot Line could be rolled up from the north-west.

These must have been tempting prospects for Nazi Germany, particularly as the German General Staff must have been aware that the extension of the Maginot Line along the Belgian frontier was still incomplete. They would have needed no spies to discover this. As the originator of the first plan to invade France by way of Belgium, Count



ARROWS INDICATE DIRECTION OF THREATENED GERMAN ATTACK

von Schlieffen pointed out when discussing von Moltke's preparations for the Franco-Prussian War that it was seldom necessary to expend large sums for espionage or to bribe high officials in order to discover the secrets of the enemy. Often the price of a railway ticket was sufficient. It is not possible to conceal the fact that open country is fortified, or unfortified, as the case may be.

It is still possible to-day that Nazi Germany will decide to carry out her old plans, because she still clings to the theory of "open warfare," and the advantages of air and submarine bases in Holland and Belgium are as great as ever.

### *The Preparations and November 11th*

The preparations for a coup are always the same, in fact Nazi Germany has her preparations for all possibilities. Propaganda was already going on against Austria, against Czechoslovakia, and against Poland, long before the question of crushing these countries had become acute. In the same way there is always a current of propaganda against Denmark, Holland, and Belgium. Nazi Germany has her grievances ready against Switzerland for use at a moment's notice, and so on.

For a long time now the Nazi propaganda apparatus has kept organizations going in Belgium, and particularly in the former German districts of Eupen and Malmédy. Like their fellow-Nazis in Czechoslovakia, the Belgian Nazis wear the traditional white stockings, and greet each other with "Heil Hitler!" and the usual outstretched arm. In May 1939 a meeting of 300 Germans took place in

the province of Liège at which a Belgian policeman found it necessary to ask a man to produce his identity card. He was vigorously denounced by a man who declared himself to be the German Consul, and who addressed him as follows :

“I am the German Consul, and I can tell you that you won’t have the right much longer to ask people for their identity cards.”

The “Consul” left the meeting in the official car of the German Embassy in Brussels. That is one case out of a hundred others which Goebbels could turn into an “incident” if he felt inclined.

Espionage plots have been revealed in Holland in which Dutch Nazis and a number of the numerous Germans living in Holland were mixed up. Shortly before the first crisis in November the Dutch police discovered a plot in which a great number of Dutch uniforms were to be smuggled over the frontier into Nazi Germany. A secret aeroplane in a secret hangar was also discovered. Naturally, its owner was a German. The uniforms could be used for a sudden and unexpected raid over the frontier to seize strong points, or in order to set down spies behind the Dutch lines from planes. The official German wireless also began to arrange a special Dutch programme with a view to influencing the population of Holland for whatever purposes might seem desirable.

In September rumours obviously emanating from German sources were spread everywhere in Belgium to the effect that Great Britain was planning a landing of troops on Belgian territory. These rumours may very well have been deliberately spread in order to afford some sort of justification

for a German invasion as a preventive measure. Indeed, the invasion of 1914 was afterwards justified by declaring that the French had prepared an invasion, and that when German troops crossed the Belgian frontier there were already French troops on Belgian territory. It is interesting to note that the old methods are still being used.

On 26th August 1939 the German Ambassador had assured the King of the Belgians that Germany proposed to respect Belgian neutrality strictly, "providing Belgium on her part remained strictly neutral." We may assume that the Belgian authorities were not very comforted by this assurance, and in the meantime the world has seen what Nazi Germany is prepared to denounce as an infringement of neutrality immediately it suits her book—even membership of the League of Nations. The same intrinsically worthless assurance was extended to Germany's other neighbours, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, and Luxemburg.

However, certain influential Belgian circles do really seem to have believed that the strict policy of neutrality which has been pursued since its inauguration a few years ago by the present King of the Belgians would be sufficient to keep out the Germans. A few weeks before the outbreak of war I met a certain Belgian gentleman in London who questioned me concerning Nazi Germany's probable intentions towards his country. When I informed him that in my opinion there were many indications that Nazi Germany intended to invade Belgium, and showed him the MS. of my book *Nazi Germany Can't Win*, he was taken aback, and declared that he would acquaint his Government

with my views. Until quite recently this gentleman held a very important ministerial post in Belgium. He at least seems to have under-estimated the danger which threatened his country. His name was to crop up in this connection later on, as we shall see.

The Belgian General Staff, on the other hand, was not so optimistic, and it really took every precaution that a small country could possibly take in peace-time to be prepared for the threatened blow. On 12th May the Belgian Minister for National Defence, Lieutenant-General Denis, gave a review of the uses to which the credit of 600 million francs voted by the Belgian Chamber for air defence was to be put: 349 million francs was to be expended for anti-aircraft batteries and barrage balloons, 176 million francs for aeroplanes, and 88 million francs for various other purposes. Preparations were made for the evacuation of particularly threatened districts, and above all the Verviers district on the German frontier; 500,000 gas masks were ordered, and a special "Territorial Air Guard" was formed, whose members were to have eight months' training for their special tasks. This question of air defence was particularly important for Belgium because later it was seen that Nazi Germany pretended to lay great value on the capacity of Belgium to defend her neutrality in the air, and during the crisis there were the inevitable suggestions—arranged for by Goebbels—that she was not in a position to do so.

Holland also made large-scale preparations to defend herself against the threatened attack, and

in particular every possible measure was taken to keep her arrangements for flooding certain areas ready for use at a moment's notice. The remaining measures adopted by both countries were similar to those taken in many other countries, and large forces of men were called to the colours. The new system of permanent mobilization had now extended to the neutral countries.

Hitler's attitude to Holland and Belgium as expressed in the speech he delivered at the beginning of October was significant. It must be remembered that all his speeches are very carefully prepared, and that although he may allow his temperament, or what passes for it, to express itself in violence of utterance and gesture, the important passages of his speeches are always discussed and exactly formulated in advance, so that one may safely base conclusions on them. For instance, in the speech in question his promises to respect the neutrality of Nazi Germany's non-belligerent neighbours differed in degree as between one small neutral and the next. Referring to Scandinavia as a whole he declared roundly:

"Germany has never had any conflicting interests with the Nordic States, nor has she any to-day."

But when he referred specifically to Denmark his tone was slightly different, and all he was prepared to say was that Nazi Germany had "refrained from drawing any conclusions detrimental to Denmark from the cession of German territory to her under the Versailles Treaty."

For anyone used to reading between the lines it is quite clear that he was deliberately revealing the corner of a trump card up his sleeve, and that

the implication was that Nazi Germany would not always necessarily "refrain," etc. Nazi-German propaganda is very active in Denmark, and has been for a long time. There are already two pro-Nazi organizations at work, a Danish National Socialist Party, and a German one amongst the Germans living in Denmark.

Referring to Holland and Belgium he declared:

"The Reich has endeavoured to continue the traditional German friendship with Holland."

That didn't sound too good, though he then continued with: "It has neither found any existing differences with that State, nor created any new ones."

Still, the difference is there. He has nothing to complain about with regard to the Scandinavian States, though he might have something against Denmark at some time in the future, and in the case of Holland he had done his best to maintain the traditional friendship. Since then, of course, he has found bones to pick with them all.

Towards Belgium he was a trace less friendly:

"I tried immediately to create friendly relations with Belgium."

He then declared that he had made no demands to Belgium arising out of the Versailles Treaty, though this was quite untrue. Observe, however, that he "tried" to create friendly relations, so that apparently in his opinion they did not exist, and there is no mention of any success having attended his efforts. It is significant to note that he used the same expression with regard to Poland, and later with regard to Great Britain. He has, in short, prepared the way for the usual declaration



that he has tried everything possible in order to come to a friendly understanding, but that all his attempts have been sabotaged by the ill-will of the others—and then, no doubt, his patience will be exhausted.

No mention was made of Luxemburg, but slightly more honeyed tones were used towards Switzerland. After that his friendliness increased gradually, via Slovakia and Hungary, to a hymn of praise for Mussolini.

The first signs that things were happening on the Belgian frontier appeared soon after the war started. Fighting was still going on in Poland when the reports of increased German activity on the frontier came in. This activity increased steadily until, on 10th October, Nazi Germany's new defences on the Belgian frontier were fully manned. Towards the end of October Dutch newspapers reported that motorized units were being concentrated on the Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) - Duisburg line, eighteen divisions in all. On 27th October the King of the Belgians delivered a broadcast address to the United States, and he did not conceal his anxiety for the fate of his country. He mentioned that his army was ten times as strong as it had been in 1914, and that Belgium proposed to remain strictly neutral with the formal approval of the three great belligerent Powers. However, his appeal to the people of the United States to lend moral support and encouragement to his people in their endeavours indicated that he attached no absolute value to the promises of Nazi Germany to respect Belgium's neutrality. Naturally, he did not mention Nazi Germany by name, but the people of the United

States will not have been for one moment in doubt as to who was meant in his appeal for support against possible danger. He also mentioned that his country was standing shoulder to shoulder with Holland in defence of peace.

In October special precautions were taken in Nazi Germany to control all telephone communication with Holland. More and more men were concentrated by Nazi Germany on the Western Front, and not only on the French frontier. In November the Dutch authorities began to place certain areas of land in the province of Utrecht under water as a precaution.

Up to that time the Dutch and Belgian authorities had declared the danger to be no more than a theoretical possibility against which preparations were to be taken. Naturally, although they insisted formally on this viewpoint, they were in no real doubt about the very practical nature of the danger. But they also knew that it would be dangerous to anger Nazi Germany and perhaps provoke her to action, for she would certainly be prepared to exploit any action which could by any stretch of the imagination be termed a breach of neutrality if it suited her purpose.

At the beginning of November important military conferences were reported from Berlin, and on 6th November the King of the Belgians suddenly paid his unexpected visit to Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands. He arrived at eleven o'clock at night, obviously in great haste. There is no doubt whatever that the object of his visit was to secure joint action by both countries in face of the danger which increasingly threatened them both. The

Press published reports to the effect that Nazi Germany was exercising diplomatic pressure on the two neutrals, and that this diplomatic pressure might quickly change to military pressure. However, the two monarchs acted very adroitly, and nothing of the sort was said or implied. In fact, their conference was given the appearance of an action of mediation between the belligerent camps in favour of peace. Both monarchs offered their personal offices to this end.

Nevertheless, German observers did not fail to note that at the same time something else of decisive importance had happened. Both the Dutch and Belgian Governments realized that a German invasion was imminent, and that it would take place unless something was done to stop it. Hitler was once again in conference with his army, naval, and air chiefs. The forces of both Holland and Belgium were mobilized for defence. Holland was prepared to open her remaining dykes at a moment's notice, and the Belgian fortifications were manned at full complement.

### *Why Germany drew back*

The direct result of all these things was an immediate decrease in the tension. At first it looked as though the main danger had shifted to the south of Holland, to the province of Limburg, and here feverish preparations for defence continued night and day. The whole province was closed for non-military motor-traffic, and anti-aircraft batteries were stationed at all important points.

On 12th November it was reported that the

previous day von Ribbentrop had once again assured the Belgian Ambassador in Berlin that Germany harboured no hostile intentions against either Holland or Belgium. Nazi Germany had obviously beaten a retreat. The German Press now began to declare that the whole crisis had been invented by the wicked newspapers, and that in reality there had not been a crisis at all. This attitude was taken up even in Holland, whose authorities lay great value on the maintenance of unruffled calm towards foreign affairs.

But on 20th November the correspondent of an important British newspaper published a review of the events as they had taken place during the crisis. From this the logic was clear. The first attack was planned to take place against Holland and to begin on 11th November. Nazi Germany had thought it best to deal with one neutral at a time, and Holland first. The Nazi leaders had hoped that, in the event of an attack on Holland, Belgium would still remain neutral and refuse to allow French and British troops to pass through her territory to go to the aid of Holland. After that her turn would come, and it would be much easier to deal with her because an attack could then be launched from two sides. Holland too would have been fairly easy prey. Even if she had defended herself to her utmost, she would not have been able to do much against Germany's overwhelming preponderance in the air.

The sudden meeting of the two monarchs and the joint action which it revealed spoiled this plan. It is true that Belgium did not promise to come to Holland's assistance under all circumstances, but

she did promise to decree general mobilization should a German army invade South Holland. It was probable that the invasion, if it came, would take place in South Holland, because Nazi Germany needed Holland for more than air and submarine bases against Great Britain. In addition, South Holland offered a better terrain for an invasion, because the inundations could not be so severe there for geographical reasons.

A Cabinet meeting took place in Brussels, and amongst those taking part was my friend who had questioned me in the summer in London. From this meeting the Minister for National Defence, Lieutenant-General Denis, went straight to the War Office to sign the proclamation for general mobilization. The Belgian Cabinet expressed complete approval of King Leopold's visit to Queen Wilhelmina and his discussions with her.

In the meantime the German Ambassador had got wind of what was going on, and we may safely assume that no hindrances were placed in his way. He telephoned Berlin at once, and his information struck the Wilhelmstrasse like a bombshell. The Nazi leaders had not reckoned with the possibility that in the event of an attack on Holland Belgium would come to her assistance. General Keitel and General Reichenau, the two most reliable National Socialist generals, were in conference with General Blaskovitz to discuss the final details of the invasion, which was fixed for the following day, when the disagreeable news arrived. Immediately they decided to postpone the action indefinitely.

The most important result of the postponement of Nazi Germany's invasion was that on both sides

the land forces continued in relative inactivity. The whole war would have taken on a different appearance if the programme prepared in Berlin had been carried out according to plan. Fierce air warfare would have started. Great Britain would probably have lived throughout the winter under the constant threat of German bombing. The unrestricted submarine campaign would have been conducted from within a short distance of the Thames Estuary. Nazi Germany would have had at least a chance.

This chance was destroyed by the sudden action of two small countries situated in an important strategic position. Nazi Germany must now make up her mind to a protracted war, and she knows what that means. It means a very considerable extra burden on the morale of the German people, the lengthening of the hunger period, and a more effective prosecution of Great Britain's naval blockade.

Naturally, it was by no means certain that this delayed and then finally abandoned attempt to repeat the experiment of 1914 would have proved a success for Nazi Germany. The whole theory of the German General Staff which led to the attack on Poland was based on the idea that, having got rid speedily of the weaker enemy, Germany could concentrate all her forces against the second enemy in the west, and that she would then still have only one front to fight on.

As a result of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-1905 Russia was greatly weakened, so much so that in his calculations Count von Schlieffen believed that Germany need not bother about her at all, and that she could be safely left to the

attentions of the Austrians whilst Germany was dealing with France.

This theory was taken over by von Schlieffen's successor, the younger Moltke, although in fact the conditions which had existed when von Schlieffen drew up his plan had radically changed. Russia made a quicker recovery than the German military experts had thought possible, and very shortly after the outbreak of hostilities Russian troops were threatening East Prussia. The German General Staff sent Ludendorff and von Hindenburg to cope with the invasion, which they did very successfully in the only Cannae of the war, at Tannenberg.

When the Chief of the Austrian General Staff, Conrad von Hoetzendorf, was informed by von Moltke, during the final discussion which took place between the Austrian and German General Staffs before the outbreak of war, that the Germans intended to leave only twelve divisions in East Prussia he was greatly taken aback. He disagreed with von Moltke, who reckoned that he would have to deal only with weak Russian forces in East Prussia, and declared:

"You are wrong to reckon like that. Russia will turn against us, it is true, but the distance from Warsaw to Berlin is not so very great. I ask you to think of what would happen should we be hard pressed and in an unfavourable situation. Russia would have the way open to her then. What will you do if you meet with no success in the west and then find yourself with the Russians in your rear?"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by General von Wetzell in his book, *Buendniskrieg (War in Alliance)*, which deals with the Austro-German alliance in 1914-1918.

To-day the situation is, of course, different, but it is nevertheless comparable. Nazi Germany has learnt her lesson well. The front in the east has been liquidated first this time. However, the only point about this success must be to follow it up by liquidating the second front in the west, and to do it quickly. The theory of lightning war was not intended to apply to certain special cases only; it was the general specific for saving Nazi Germany the vast expenditure of materials otherwise inevitable in a big war, an expenditure she could not meet owing to her lack of raw materials. However, even the lightning war in the east lasted long enough to permit the enemy in the west to prepare himself to a far greater extent than he otherwise would have been able; and perhaps even more time than the actual war itself was taken up by the transport of the troops from east to west, by the necessary reorganization and replenishing of their depleted ranks, and by repairs to aeroplanes, tanks, and other war vehicles.

The result was that when Nazi Germany was finally prepared for the attack in the west her opportunity had already passed. The "peace offensive," which was perhaps intended originally only for domestic consumption in order to convince the German people of the good intentions of the Nazi regime, became a real peace offensive, which the Nazis would have dearly liked to see succeed. It failed. The only possibility left, and a very doubtful one, of bringing the war to a certain satisfactory conclusion for Nazi Germany, or at least of considerably improving her strategic position, was the attack on Holland and Belgium.



Now that this possibility has also been let pass Nazi Germany finds herself in a much graver position.

It is now quite possible, and even probable, that later on some German military historian and critic will prove satisfactorily that the western variant of Nazi Germany's plans was the one that obviously ought to have been put into operation: a sudden drive against Holland and Belgium, whilst they were still unprepared, the outflanking of the uncompleted Maginot Line across the Belgian frontier, and at the same time immediate and unrestricted air and submarine warfare against Great Britain. The increased effect of the air arm would have made the situation different in any case from that of 1914 even if the drive against the Maginot Line over the Belgian frontier had not proved successful. One offensive weapon, the air arm, would still have remained, whereas after the failure of the 1914 drive nothing was left but grim positional warfare.

Of course, the British and French air forces would then have been freed from any consideration for Dutch-Belgian neutrality, but at least they would have had to fly over well-protected but non-German territory before reaching their objectives, whereas the German air forces would have been ready on the frontiers.

However, it is not our task to help future German military theoreticians to rack their brains. Very likely both variants would have proved wrong, though perhaps one was worse than the other. The only right thing would have been not to plunge into war at all, but even that would have been wrong for the Nazi system. National Socialism

needs war and the destruction of all its enemies in turn.

*The Danger is Not Yet Passed*

Every German soldier, every German non-commissioned officer, and every cadet at Germany's military academies has always been taught that there is one cardinal error which he must never, never make: to remain inactive. Something must always be done: a military commander may never remain inactive. Even if what is done turns out to have been wrong, at least something has been done, and there was a chance of doing the right thing even by accident. We must therefore expect that Nazi Germany will do something rather than remain inactive even if the situation is as unfavourable as possible for her.

What she will do is quite another matter. If we may assume that she will not do the obviously unfavourable thing, we must do our best to choose from the possibilities that are left. The leaders of a country hard pressed on all sides have not always time enough to think clearly. If Nazi Germany's air offensive fails to produce the desired results, and if her submarine and mine campaign are not sufficiently successful, then, for good or evil, she will have to do something else. It is quite possible that the plans for an invasion of Holland and Belgium have not yet been abandoned completely. The conditions and the prospects are less favourable than they were, but it would probably be better to launch the attempt rather than to do nothing and gradually lose strength

by a process of attrition which would also cause increasing social and political tension at home.

Such a situation existed in 1918. The first serious mutinies had taken place in the navy in 1917 and they had been crushed with death sentences and executions. Strikes were springing up everywhere, and they culminated in the great munition workers' strike of January 1918. In the big towns the plate-glass windows of empty food stores were being smashed by angry housewives.

At this moment the rumours of a big spring offensive began to spread. The state of mind changed. Here was the last hope of ending the war successfully. That would be better in any case than an end of the war by defeat. New enthusiasm sprang up at the front. I noticed it in myself, though I had been convinced for a long time that defeat was inevitable. In the first hour of the offensive I was wounded by a bayonet-thrust when taking a British trench. The wound was serious enough to have permitted me to go back, but I had it patched up as well as I could and remained with my men for another five days, until it became physically impossible to go on any longer. The mere fact of release from trench warfare worked wonders. The oldest and most dissatisfied soldiers suddenly became willing youngsters again.

However, the change for the worse came very rapidly. The fresh troops sent out from home proved less reliable than the men already at the front. Discipline and habit made most of the veterans fight on effectively. In an article on

"The Black Day" at Amiens on 8th August 1918 Major Wienskowski, one of Germany's official military historians, writes:

"It must be remembered that the reinforcements which arrived, only once, for the battalions in the front line consisted chiefly of men who had already been demoralized at home, and were unwilling to fight; some of them, in fact, were mutinous. A good third of these men had disappeared before the transports arrived at the front at all, and only a fraction of those who did arrive were really suited to the great sacrifices demanded by the fighting on the Western Front in 1918."<sup>1</sup>

My personal experience in May 1918 confirmed this statement. On returning to the front after recovering from my wound I was given charge of a transport of about 800 reinforcements. On the way an increasing number of the men disappeared until finally about half of them had vanished. Some of them returned later, but many of them were gone for good and all. The Nazi authorities are well aware of this danger, and there is no doubt that they will deliver a desperate blow before demoralization sets in at home and hampers military operations at the front. They will also be inclined to undertake things merely in order to keep up the flagging spirit of their men even if what they do has little chance of achieving anything decisive. And, above all, they will certainly act as the Nazi Minister Frick declared as recently as 13th January 1940 in a speech:

<sup>1</sup> Major Wienskowski, Oberregierungsrat in the Army Historical Research Institute, in an article published in the *Berliner Boersen-zeitung*, 7th August 1938.

“We shall stake all our forces on winning this war as quickly as possible.”

### *The Second Dutch Crisis*

In January 1940 the canals of Holland were frozen to a depth of fifteen or sixteen inches, so that even heavy vehicles could have driven over the surface. The Dutch military authorities realized the danger and so did the Belgian, and in both countries troops which had been given leave were hastily ordered back to their units. *La Gazette*, a Liberal newspaper published in Brussels, declared very truly :

“There is no reason to believe that Germany’s intentions regarding Belgium have changed. Certain articles have appeared in the German Press during the past few days which do not exactly breathe a spirit of good will towards neutral members of the League, and there have already been very many instances of German planes flying over our territory.”

At the New Year Hitler and his military commanders addressed appeals to their people and to the troops under their command which left nothing to wish for in point of clarity. Hitler formulated his war aims as follows:—

1. Germany, and with her the whole of Europe, must be freed from British tyranny once and for all ;
2. The war-mongers must be finally disarmed ;  
and
3. A new Europe must be created under Germany’s leadership.

On 5th January the world learned that further important discussions were taking place amongst Nazi Germany's political and military leaders, and it was soon seen what was under way. The Dutch Government issued an official communiqué reading as follows:—

“For some time now tendentious reports have been appearing in certain foreign newspapers casting doubt on Holland's firm determination to defend herself against attack with every means in her power. In order to render any misunderstanding impossible it is necessary to stress anew that the integrity of the Netherlands cannot be the subject of any negotiations.”

Although it was never quite clear what foreign newspapers had suggested that the Dutch Government was considering a surrender, the purport of this official proclamation was clear. Only Nazi Germany could ever propose “negotiations” having as their object a surrender of Dutch integrity, and the implication was that some such official or semi-official approaches had been made to the Dutch Government in that sense. Nazi leaders have declared more than once, in various public utterances, that it was about time that Holland made up her mind to join some bigger economic block, meaning, of course, an economic block formed by Nazi Germany and controlled by her.

The official proclamation of The Hague Government was followed by further illuminating information. Holland, it was declared, had worked ceaselessly to strengthen her defences. A whole belt of blockhouses, small and large forts, had been built to protect all threatened points, and artillery

was in position. The relations of the country to Belgium had also not been neglected. A glance at the map would show clearly how easy it would be for both countries to receive assistance in the event of attack, providing only that the first onslaught could be held up.

This last statement was a clear enough hint to Nazi Germany that in the meantime Holland had turned, not unsuccessfully, to other quarters for outside assistance in case of need. The Dutch Government had refused to be lulled into a false sense of security by Hitler's assurance that the concentration of troops in November had been merely preparations for harmless manœuvres. This excuse had been used too often before to carry any conviction now, for instance, against Austria and Czechoslovakia. In addition, the first crisis in May 1938, when Hitler mobilized and then swore that there had been no mobilization, showed the world how much importance should be attached to his denials.

In the meantime further news arrived to stress the seriousness of the situation. Eighteen divisions were reported to be concentrated on the Dutch frontier, and no less than forty-two divisions on the Belgian frontier. Recklinghausen, a Westphalian industrial town only about forty miles from the Dutch frontier, was made into Nazi Germany's Grand Army Headquarters. Near the Dutch frontier at Kleve heavy artillery was posted, with a range as far as Utrecht. New air-fields had also been laid out near the Dutch frontier (and they were already occupied), quite apart from the normal air-fields of that district, which is better

supplied with them than perhaps any other area in the world. It was calculated that a thousand planes and about a million men were ready for action, though a reliable estimate was difficult because German territory along the Dutch frontier consists chiefly of moorland, in which there are many labour camps and concentration camps (these latter are already notorious all over the world) and they could hold vast numbers of men at need, without the troops coming much into contact with the outside world. Further, first-class roads have been cut through the district in recent years.

Towards the end of the second week in January a German aeroplane was forced down on Belgian territory, and it was reported that valuable information had been found in the possession of the airmen concerning the intentions of the German High Command. At first it was reported that photos of the Albert Canal, the canal which protects Belgium from the north, had been found. Later on reports spoke of even more valuable finds, according to which the attack on Holland was timed to begin on 17th January. As a result all leave was stopped in the Dutch and Belgian armies, and leave was also stopped for the British Air Force. Both sides were prepared.

The Dutch and Belgian authorities were not certain whether the material they had found was authentic or not, and the whole thing might have been a deliberate bluff on the part of the Germans. Perhaps Nazi Germany was anxious to exert this pressure in order to see whether Holland could be forced to make concessions when face to face



with the imminent threat of invasion, concessions in the matter of "the integrity of the Netherlands," to quote the official proclamation of the Dutch Government. The date fixed for the invasion might be deliberately false in order to lull the Dutch into a false sense of security when once it was seen that the invasion did not take place on that date. Or it might be a double bluff. The Dutch might see through the bluff and feel convinced that no invasion would take place, and then just on that account the invasion would actually take place on that day.

The pressure was increased by a German complaint to the effect that a Dutch military aeroplane had violated German territory. An official German protest was rejected by the Dutch authorities, but the Germans refused to accept the rejection of their protest. On 15th January the Nazi Press broke the silence it had maintained up till then and began to attack Holland and Belgium. It appears that French sources had fed the Dutch and Belgian newspapers with alarmist rumours, and these had caused the crisis. Recognizing that an attack on the Siegfried Line had no chance of success, France and Britain had determined to extend the war to Holland and Belgium. In other words, the Nazi Press accused the Allied Powers of just the thing Nazi Germany had long planned to do on her own account. The Dutch and Belgian governments were accused of having let themselves be inveigled into taking provocative measures against Germany.

At the same time the Nazi Press began to attack the Scandinavian countries, and Norway and Sweden, who were both beginning to feel that their

turn might soon come, were accused of violating their neutrality towards Finland. The charge that Great Britain and France had deliberately spread false reports concerning Nazi Germany's preparations was particularly stupid, because it is the obvious aim of both Western Powers to avoid serious contact with the enemy on land as far as possible. Nazi Germany was the only country with an interest in loosening the deadlock on the Western Front and obtaining room to manœuvre.

In the meantime more was learned concerning the remarkable airman who had permitted such important material to fall into the hands of the Belgian authorities. It was suggested that the little blind god had once again intervened in world history. A German major was given valuable documents containing the details of the forthcoming invasion of Belgium and Holland to take to Cologne, where, as it happened, his dear wife was living, whom he had only just married. Although he had been provided with railway accommodation he preferred to take an opportunity which offered itself of going by aeroplane in order to be with his wife all the sooner. But ill-luck dogged him and the pilot lost his way, found himself over Dutch territory, turned back, came over Belgian territory, and had to make a forced landing. Somehow or other he omitted to destroy the valuable documents in his possession. Belgium was warned.

Naturally, we are not in a position to discover whether this touching story of the uxorious major is correct, but the objective facts as reported are that a German Army major was captured in a plane

which made a forced landing. He had papers in his possession which he tried with signal lack of success to burn. He had no matches, and neither had the pilot, and they had to ask a passing Belgian peasant politely if he could oblige them. He couldn't.

In any case, on the alleged invasion date nothing happened—at least, nothing happened on the military front, though something interesting happened on the political front instead. Neutral newspapers reported that Nazi Germany intended to call a conference of the neutral Powers in order to persuade them to line up with Germany. The reports were substantiated by an article in the Czech *Narodni Politika*, a newspaper which was fiercely Czech nationalist prior to the German invasion, but which, as often happens where patriotic extremists are involved, changed its tone with remarkable celerity after the invasion. The importance of this article was enhanced by the fact that the bulletin of the German Foreign Office saw fit to make particular reference to it.

It is possible that the idea was to combine political pressure on the neutrals as a whole with military pressure on one or two of their number. In any case, it is an old Nazi trick to combine these two forms of pressure, and it would have suited them much better if, for instance, Poland had given way to the double pressure and thereby saved Nazi Germany the necessity of going to war at all. If it had been merely a question of intimidating the neutrals, then Denmark would have offered a better subject for military pressure, because the British and French armies would not have been

behind her, nor can her military resources be compared with those of Holland and Belgium combined, which are by no means negligible. If Denmark had collapsed in face of such pressure, Nazi Germany would have been at the gates of Norway and Sweden.

The fact that the military pressure was exerted on Holland and Belgium instead indicates that Nazi Germany's intentions were somewhat different. If one thing did not succeed, the other might. If the invasion did not come off, the political manoeuvre might be successful. The Nazis had two strings to their bow.

Neither plan, however, met with success. In the meantime a new enemy put in an appearance, the severe weather, which was also making things very unpleasant for the Red Army in its attack on Finland. The Dutch inundated areas were frozen over, it was true, and even heavy vehicles could have used them, but not without danger, for the surface could have easily been broken by artillery fire. In addition, a severe frost is often followed rapidly by an equally severe thaw, and that would have rendered the Dutch roads impassable and the Dutch terrain a bog trap for tanks, artillery, and other heavy traffic.

The German military authorities have erected a broad zone of barbed-wire entanglements along the Dutch frontier, but this is less a defence against possible Dutch aggression than a precaution against mass desertions into Dutch territory. The world knows quite definitely that Dutch troops would never take the offensive, and that the Dutch authorities would never permit British troops to

land on Dutch territory—unless of course Holland was first attacked by Nazi Germany.

There was a third possibility, though it is difficult to believe in, namely, that the German General Staff reckoned that, in face of the German threat, British and French troops would occupy Belgium, and that Nazi Germany would then have the excuse she needed for invading Belgian territory.

After 17th January the tension decreased a little, and leave was restored in the British Air Force. The Dutch and Belgian military authorities, however, continued their preparations, so that any further attempts on the part of the German Army to break the stalemate on the Western Front at the expense of Holland and Belgium would meet with a still greater volume of resistance.

Despite all his manœuvres, Hitler did not succeed in obtaining the initiative, but he had shown the world that he had not yet admitted defeat. However, the idea that Hitler—in this case the German General Staff—fears the final arbitrament of bloody war, and would be prepared to seek it only under particularly favourable circumstances, had received further support.

## Chapter Six

### THE MUNICH OUTRAGE

“Unless we can intimidate the enemy we shall be forced into the defensive ourselves, and there will be no way out of it” (Roehm, in a conversation quoted by Goebbels in his book *Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei*).

WE know to-day from the lips of a man who was formerly a prominent Nazi, and who is still looked upon as one, that the Nazis themselves set fire to the Reichstag. Dr Rauschning, the former President of the Danzig Senate, has admitted in an interview that he had it direct from Goering himself, the same Goering who was so anxious to have the three unjustly accused Bulgarians beheaded for a crime he knew they had not committed, and who actually sent the unfortunate tool van der Lubbe to the scaffold for his own crime. Most people in Germany never doubted that the Nazis had engineered the outrage, though they had no direct proofs, and a man who dared give voice to the suspicion risked his life in doing so.

To-day there are clearer and more damning proofs that the Nazis themselves engineered the recent “attempt” on Hitler’s life in Munich. Any impartial judge presented with the facts of the case as they are known to-day would be compelled to order the arrest of a number of quite well-known persons in Germany under the strongest suspicion of complicity in the affair. The first name on his list would have to be that of Himmler, the chief

of Nazi Germany's notorious secret police, but not far behind his name would be that of Hitler himself, against whom the outrage was ostensibly planned. However, we may rest assured that there is not a judge in Germany who would dare to do his duty: it would cost him his life. The man who is prepared to slaughter his most devoted followers at a moment's notice would not hesitate to dispose of a judge.

The Munich bomb explosion is not merely one in a long chain of violent happenings in Nazi Germany of purely domestic importance. The affair has international significance and therefore it interests us. The bare facts are, that on the anniversary of his farcical beer-cellar putsch in Munich in 1923 Hitler delivered a speech in the Bürgerbräukeller, the hallowed spot, and that shortly after this speech, before the hall was emptied of his audience, an explosion took place, killing a number of people and maiming many more. No well-known Nazi officials were amongst the victims. Hitler himself had spoken only a very short time compared with his usual custom and had then quickly left the hall.

Immediately after the explosion the blame was placed on "the British Secret Service," and a fierce newspaper campaign began. But it soon died down, and then the "perpetrator" was found. This was an almost unknown man, who, it appeared, had been an inmate of a concentration camp for a long time. He had no relatives, and two men who had been his nearest companions in the concentration camp were murdered shortly afterwards. Just before the explosion two British officials were

kidnapped on Dutch territory and rushed across the frontier into Germany. They were said to have been engaged in the preparations for the outrage and to have confessed their complicity.

Up to the time of writing (the end of February 1940) nothing further has been heard about the progress of this most important case, though normally an attempt on the life of the head of a State would be dealt with as quickly as possible.

### *Circumstantial Evidence*

Hitler's speech in the Bürgerbräukeller was directed exclusively against Great Britain. It was in fact an explosion of fierce hatred against the country he held responsible for the rejection of his peace overtures, when he desired so fervently that they should be accepted. He proclaimed that the war was about to begin, a ruthless war to crush Germany's enemies. A thoroughly ruthless war must have seemed to Hitler to be the only possible chance of winning at all. But at the same time it was not so easy to convince his own people and the world of the necessity for murderous warfare against a country whose air force had not dropped a single bomb on any German town despite the fact that it had often been in a position to do so. Thus if Great Britain refused to indulge in ruthless warfare of her own free will she had to be presented to the people of Germany and the world as perfidious and ruthless.

Immediately after the Reichstag outrage, in fact whilst the Reichstag was still burning, and at a time when there can have been no concrete



proof against anyone, the blame was placed on the Communists, because it was the Communists the Nazis wished to destroy. Immediately after the Munich bomb outrage the blame was placed on Great Britain. The ruins were still smoking when it was officially announced that clues pointed to the outrage being of foreign origin. The ingenuity of the Gestapo was extraordinary, so much so that many people found it distinctly odd that such an efficient force had not succeeded in discovering the plot against the life of the most closely-watched man in the world and preventing its perpetration altogether.

Further circumstantial evidence is provided by certain discrepancies in the official reports of the affair. The attempt is said to have been very carefully planned, and the bomb planted in a lumber-room over the platform on which Hitler was to speak. But how was it possible for plotters to prepare such an attempt on Hitler's life when they did not know that he was going to speak at all? On the day that Hitler actually delivered his speech it was publicly announced in the Press and through the radio that Hess, his personal representative, would speak. Hess is not a person of any importance, and it is highly unlikely that anyone would have taken all the trouble which the alleged "perpetrator" is said to have taken in order to dispose of him. All that would have happened would have been a new and fierce wave of persecution directed against various oppositional groups, such as followed the killing of one of the officials of the German Embassy in Paris in November 1938. Incidentally it is perhaps interesting to note that

this affair took place exactly a year previously; the great wave of Jewish persecutions was launched on 9th November. In any case, even a successful attempt on the life of a person of secondary importance like Hess would have been of very little political consequence.

Notwithstanding the official announcements, Hitler himself appeared in the Bürgerbräukeller, and delivered a short and extremely violent hate speech against Great Britain. Now if the conspirators did not know that Hitler was going to speak, and, if he did, when his speech would begin, and how long it would last, how could they have set the fuse of the infernal machine? In any case, they would have been very unlikely to set the fuse as late as it was set, and so risk missing him altogether. On the face of it, the most favourable moment would have been about the middle of a normal Hitler speech, but in fact it went off at what would have been about the end of it. Those diabolically clever conspirators in the British secret service did not realize that they must set the fuse so that the explosion should take place at a time when the speaker had most certainly begun his speech, but equally certainly not yet ended it. That is a bit difficult to swallow.

On the other hand, the time most suited for the explosion from the Nazi point of view was just towards the close of the meeting, when all the important people had disappeared and only a little group of loyal nobodies was left to provide suitable victims. The Nazi leaders have shown clearly on more than one occasion that they do not attach much importance to the lives of their own rank-and-

file. Now before the rescue work had been completed the clever Gestapo had already found the clockwork mechanism of the infernal machine, which by some strange miracle had not been blown into a thousand pieces by the terrific force of the explosion. In fact, they found it so intact that they could still read the time at which the fuse had been set.

They also knew at once that the infernal machine had been placed in a lumber-room just over the speakers' platform. This is also a most peculiar thing, because at least the day before the place was searched from top to bottom in the usual fashion by the special branch of the Gestapo entrusted with such work. And these zealous experts failed to find the bomb. Still more peculiar is that, according to the account of an eye-witness who was on the spot from the beginning of the rescue work, there was no such lumber-room over the speakers' platform. This witness reports that the explosion came from the gallery, the very spot which is always occupied by particularly reliable members of the S.S. and agents of the Gestapo. Only these absolutely reliable people are ever permitted to sit in the gallery, from which the precious life of the Fuehrer could be threatened more easily than from the floor.

The same eye-witness reports that huge girders of steel were twisted and torn away, that the supporting columns collapsed, and the roof fell in, so that the bomb must have been a particularly large and powerful one. Who could have smuggled such a bomb into the place and concealed it successfully? No one but the Nazis themselves.

The world has not been told what the clues are which indicate that the plot was directed from abroad. Of course, it is difficult at all times for a Prussian to be regarded as anything but a foreigner in Munich. In war-time Germany, carefully segregated from the outside world, any foreigner is an object of suspicion, and under surveillance. And what about the two Englishmen kidnapped on Dutch territory? About two months later we hear of them again, but not in connection with the explosion, and it appears they are to be charged with entirely different offences. We may assume that there is nothing else to connect the explosion with the outside world or we should surely have heard of it by this time. However, that does not mean that the Gestapo will not invent something or other in the future.

Shortly after the explosion the world was informed that "the perpetrator" had been arrested. All his preparations, it was said, had been made some weeks in advance. Dressed as a worker he obtained entrance to the building and built the infernal machine into one of the columns of the hall. Shortly before the explosion he visited the building again to assure himself that the mechanism of the infernal machine was still in order. All one can say of this story is, that the man carried off an extraordinary performance. One might almost suspect that he was in league with superhuman powers.

Then the first misfortune happened: it was discovered that the man, whose name was Elsner, was safely under lock and key in Dachau internment camp at the time when he was supposed

to have planted the bomb. But the Gestapo is seldom at a loss, and it promptly murdered those who had been in the same cell with him. With these awkward witnesses out of the way it was possible to load all the blame on to Elsner, who, it appears, has no relatives or close friends anywhere, a circumstance which gives rise to the suspicion that he was carefully chosen for the role. There is no one who is likely to make a fuss about what happens to him. Here we have a complete Reichstag fire plot all over again, except that the preparations are so crude and unconvincing that Herr Himmler ought really to ask for his apprenticeship fees back again. In Nazi Germany the authorities can give the general public whatever version they like no matter how idiotic it may sound. Not a word of criticism can arise anywhere.

### *The Other Possibilities*

Certainly there might quite reasonably have been some other explanation of the explosion apart from a Nazi frame-up. There are oppositional elements in Germany which would be quite capable of such an act. The men behind all the political murders of Weimar Ministers and other prominent Republicans afterwards went over to the Nazis. They always maintained relations with the Reichswehr, the predecessor of the present German Army. Hitler is not much loved in old German Army circles, though they are quite prepared to use him for their own purposes. In any case, if these people had arranged the explosion they would have done it a little more cleverly.

Then, of course, there is the Left-wing opposition. However, there is a very good reason indeed for believing that Left-wing circles had nothing to do with it, namely, that they are very well aware that the system they wish to destroy is impervious to a bomb or two. The Left-wing opposition has always strictly rejected the methods of individual terrorism. It knows perfectly well that if it were possible to lay any such crime at its door there would be an unprecedented wave of persecutions against anyone and everyone suspected of connection with it. That knowledge alone would have been sufficient to prevent its committing any such gross stupidity. In any case, it would be necessary to give some reasonable explanation of how it knew that Hitler was going to deliver a speech at that time and in that place.

No, these other possibilities do not fit the known facts; only one explanation does that: the real perpetrators were Hitler and his friends. They murdered their own comrades once again, just as they did on 30th June 1934. But this did not prevent Hitler's appearing at the grave of his murdered followers, and offering their relatives his consolation in a broken voice. Greater cynicism and perfidy is hardly conceivable.

### *The Consequences*

A further proof that the perpetrators had quite other objects in view was the fact that immediately after the explosion a wave of arrests swept over the country. Amongst those arrested were men and women known to have been associated with the

Left-wing opposition in former days, and men and women known to have been associated with the old Right wing, which the Nazis still mistrust. Old Conservatives, Army officers, and many other people who would certainly never have had any connections with a concentration-camp type like Elsnar, were amongst those arrested. Just as at the time of the Reichstag fire, the Nazis had a pretext for arresting all and sundry who were suspected of being dangerous or of threatening to become dangerous, without bothering about collecting any concrete evidence against them. Incidentally no system which is firmly rooted has occasion to descend to such methods to bolster up its rule.

In addition, the Fuehrer needed another ring to his halo to brighten it up a bit; it was becoming slightly tarnished. A man so defended by Providence is obviously being preserved for some high mission. The people may therefore trust him absolutely, and accept with a resigned and even cheerful spirit all the suffering which may result from his actions.

### *The Reasons*

All the known circumstances attending the Munich explosion point to the fact that it was a second Reichstag fire plot. There is nothing to suggest that it really was an authentic attempt on Hitler's life. None of the arguments put forward by the Propaganda Ministry will hold water. On the other hand there are numerous indications which suggest that the whole affair was a frame-up. In 1933 the Nazis required some good pretext for

inciting the population against the Communists and against the whole Left-wing movement, and some justification for the wave of terror they intended to let loose against their opponents, which might otherwise have aroused lively resentment throughout the world. Then came the Reichstag fire. After the outbreak of the present war the situation was very similar. War had tarnished Hitler's prestige amongst the German people, and the influence of the Left-wing opposition naturally increased. Something had to be done about it. Merely to arrest people, many of them Nazis, because they spread rumours and believed them, and because they showed no enthusiasm for the victories in Poland, would have created a lot of bad blood. Something big was necessary—murder, mass murder, something to stir up the people again. The opposition was wise enough to provide no such pretext, so one had to be made. It was done thoroughly.

As the German public was given only very general and vague information about the "accomplices" of the perpetrator in Germany, and no indication was given as to whether they belonged to the Left or to the Right, the authorities were enabled to arrest people of both tendencies. How many were actually arrested we shall learn only later. It must be remembered that although the Communists were blamed for the burning of the Reichstag, it was not only Communists who were arrested in the subsequent wave of persecutions, but people of all parties who had made themselves objectionable in one way or another to the Nazis, and whose names had been down on lists drawn up long before the Nazis came to power.



And on 30th June and the subsequent days the Nazis murdered everyone who came under suspicion, including even General von Schleicher and his wife, and innumerable Jews who certainly had nothing whatever to do with any "plot" on the part of Roehm. On 8th November 1939 the same thing occurred again, so that we may reasonably suppose that similar reasons were behind the action.

In addition, however, there were foreign political reasons this time. It was not for nothing that Hitler raged so fiercely against Great Britain in his speech. Immediately after the explosion the culprit was said to have made his first preparations for the outrage as early as August. In other words, the "British Secret Service" had planned the crime long before the outbreak of war—*i.e.* had already harboured warlike intentions. Incidentally, it is rather difficult to believe that if the British Secret Service ever did go in for anything of the sort, it would have used an infernal machine clearly indicating its British origin.

The Nazis hoped that the outrage would assist them in convincing the people of France that they had been deliberately jockeyed into war by Great Britain. With the Munich explosion Great Britain had now really provided a *casus belli*, and the war could begin in earnest. When large-scale air raids had taken place, with the inevitable loss of civilian life, the Nazis could then turn round and place the blame for it on the British Government.

It was hoped, too, that the neutrals would be impressed, and in the meantime other tricks were tried. According to reports, the Gestapo was busily engaged in fabricating very interesting

material from the statements of the two British agents who were kidnapped in Holland and rushed over the German frontier. Dutch quarters in Berlin were informed significantly that "Holland will learn about the sensational material with mixed feelings." It would appear, therefore, that the instigators of the Munich outrage did not only wish to dispose of Hitler, but also to put the Dutch Government into an embarrassing position.

Of course, the real aim of the Gestapo was to provide some excuse for the invasion of Holland, which was fixed to take place a few days later. If the Dutch Government identified itself with the "culprits" by demanding the return of the kidnapped men, or even by protesting against the kidnapping, then that would do just as well. Naturally, Nazi Germany need grant no consideration to the defenders of such criminal outrages. She needed some excuse for overwhelming a small country to which Hitler had assured his friendship only a few weeks before. The Nazis could also have demanded that the Dutch Government should give permission for Nazi planes to fly over Dutch territory in their struggle against such a criminal enemy as Great Britain. If the Dutch Government refused, as was highly likely, then there was another reason to justify the invasion. There was no invasion, and therefore we have no detailed information concerning the intentions of the Gestapo.

It is no argument against our thesis to say that the reasons offered by the Nazis would have sounded very unconvincing, or that it is peculiar that the Nazis are always anxious to obtain such reasons

for their actions, seeing that an invasion without excuse would probably stand a greater chance of success in any case. The Nazis are very methodical, and they have carefully examined the effects of an obvious injustice on public opinion. The author of *Ueberraschung im Kriege* (*The Element of Surprise in Warfare*), General von Erfurth, has devoted a whole chapter of his book to the point, and he writes:

“It is very instructive indeed to note the very great care Bismarck always devoted to just this question. In 1870 he succeeded by his ingenious management of Prussia’s relations with France in indisputably placing the blame for the declaration of a war which seemed to him inevitable on to the shoulders of the French Government.”

He had done much the same thing, though with greater caution, in 1866 against Austria. That had been particularly necessary because it was a war between combatants of German blood, and therefore very unpopular.

“It is only too easy,” he writes, “for the country which is compelled to declare war to be blamed for the war itself.”

However, for those who knew the whole truth, the responsibility for the declaration of war was not identical with the responsibility for the war itself, though it was often of paramount importance for the onlooker who was not in the know. The upshot of a war could not be foreseen with any certainty even when one side seemed to have all the trumps. The decision to brush aside all moral considerations would not be taken lightly by every statesman. In the eyes of the world the country which attacked was the country responsible for the war.

That is very interesting, and it shows us why Nazi Germany wished to play the role of the injured innocent. Great Britain was the aggressor, supported by Holland, and Germany would therefore be justified in invading Holland. The Munich bomb outrage was one of the means employed to convince public opinion of the justification of an invasion.

## *Chapter Seven*

### NAZI GERMANY'S ECONOMIC WEAKNESS

TO-DAY wars are no longer fought and won purely on the military field. On the contrary, the chief role is usually played by the economic factor, and for this reason the methods used in the prosecution of war depend on the economic resources at the disposal of the belligerent parties. During the World War we heard again and again that time was working for the Allied Powers. When the German authorities launched their campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare we heard the same thing in Germany. The chief supporter of this campaign, Grand Admiral von Tirpitz, relied on the information supplied him by Helfferich, the German Finance Minister, who, in his turn, relied on his informants in the economic system, such as the Frankfort grain merchant Weil, the owner of the big grain business Weil-Hermanos of Buenos Aires and Rotterdam.

As the British authorities knew to their cost, the calculation was not a bad one, but the Germans had overlooked one point, namely, that wars cannot be won exclusively on the economic field. This was true of both the belligerent camps, but it applied still more strongly to Germany. It was the great battles of 1918, with their enormous expenditure of materials, which drained Germany's resources dry. No less than 9,000,000 shells and about 7000 guns had to be concentrated for the one offensive of 21st March 1918 alone. In addition

there were the aeroplanes, the oil requirements, the mines, the infantry ammunition, the strain on the railways, the enormous number of horses, and, finally, the men. Germany's food resources were strained to breaking-point when the end came, and there was a shortage of almost everything. The state of Germany's material resources disposed of the last hopes of victory. If Germany had not fought the victorious offensives of 1918 it seems quite likely that she would have been able to hold out much longer.

The Nazi authorities are well aware that their country is in a similar position to-day, and all signs indicate that they propose to prosecute the war from this standpoint. Nazi Germany's policy of always isolating and defeating one of her weaker opponents on the political field without the expense of going to war at all, the quick victory in Poland, and the haunting fear of being forced into a real war in the west, all show this clearly. It must not be forgotten that shortly before the outbreak of the war Nazi Germany had completely brought in her harvest, that she had certain reserve stores of food, and that in July and August 1940 a new harvest will be ready. It is possible that the 1940 harvest will turn out to be smaller than the preceding one, but at least it will give the country a margin of many months with regard to grain. Despite the British naval blockade Nazi Germany is still importing quite a considerable amount of food from Holland, Denmark, the countries of eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Italy.

The position is similar with regard to raw materials. Certain reserve supplies have been

built up, and it will be possible to eke them out with "*Ersatz*." Here, too, Nazi Germany is still importing quite considerable quantities, and she is in a position to exploit the economic systems of Poland and Czechoslovakia to the point of ruin if need be. When these two countries begin to develop into a burden on Nazi Germany's economic system it is possible that they will be granted some sort of "independence" in order to save her the trouble of assisting them.

However, the situation will change fundamentally if a real first-class war starts, and it is this that Hitler is still striving to avoid. Nazi Germany's whole economic programme has been drawn up almost exclusively to meet the needs of the army, but nevertheless in the last resort the army will have to make do with what is available. Food-stuffs have been rationed as strictly as possible, and the civil consumption of petrol has been cut down so severely that very few private cars have been left on the roads at all. But there is a limit to this sort of thing.

The probable duration of military operations has been carefully calculated and brought into alignment with political possibilities. In his book *Wirtschaftliche Mobilmachung* (*Economic Mobilization*), published in Potsdam in 1935, Justus Schmitt writes:

"On the other hand, all decisions concerning the volume and urgency of, let us say, war requirements proper must be taken in co-operation with the military authorities. Such decisions must also be dependent on the judgment of the political authorities concerning the duration of the war, the intensity of the prosecution of the war, etc."

However, the duration of a war and the intensity of its prosecution do not depend on one side alone. The low intensity of warfare on land in the present struggle undoubtedly coincides with Nazi Germany's wishes, no doubt to some extent because it gives the Nazis the possibility of waging a political war, and playing out their political cards against the military cards of their opponents.

In the meantime, the failure of these political cards has altered the situation. Nevertheless, we should not attach any excessive hopes to the economic side of the war, and we should certainly not expect a rapid end to the conflict on that account. If signs of economic weakness nevertheless make themselves felt on Nazi Germany's side this may be taken as an indication that a sudden intensification of the prosecution of the war might bring it to an unexpectedly rapid close.

### *The German Railways*

"One thing is quite certain: Nazi Germany cannot wage a war successfully with her present railway apparatus" (Necker, *Nazi Germany Can't Win*, p. 272).

What was once the best railway system in Europe was already in a very bad state even before the outbreak of war, because its maintenance had been neglected in favour of speeding up war production. The prosecution of war lays particularly heavy burdens on the railway systems of the belligerent countries. It was not difficult to prophesy that Nazi Germany would soon be in trouble with her railways. Nazi Germany is a country cut off as far as possible from the outside world, and every



difficulty is placed in the way of reporters who wish to discover the real truth, but there are some things which cannot be concealed. It is possible to keep delays more or less secret where goods traffic is concerned, but when passenger traffic is radically cut down and a whole series of disasters takes place then the world knows. A long series of fatal accidents on Nazi Germany's railways began shortly after the outbreak of war, and in December there were two major disasters within the space of twenty-four hours. The accidents which have become known have claimed the extraordinarily high total of over 400 dead. Of course, railway accidents take place in all countries, and they take place more frequently in war-time, but nowhere has such a series of accidents taken place outside Nazi Germany.

It is difficult to learn anything about the particular causes. Signals were overrun, we are told, and we know that the railway personnel is too small and the men overworked. Old wooden carriages are being pressed into service again instead of new steel ones being manufactured. All these things are the result of the war and the long period of war preparations which preceded it. No government can squeeze the last ounce out of a country with impunity. The German railways are experiencing the same trouble as they did in the last years of the World War, but this time the difficulties are making themselves felt right at the beginning of the war.

Even before the outbreak of war Nazi Germany's shortage of locomotives was estimated at 5000. During the course of four years it was planned to

build 6000 locomotives, but even if that were carried out it would not mean that the shortage had been made up and a reserve established. The well-known German locomotive works, Schwartzkopf, calculates the necessary locomotive replacements in Germany at between 800 and 1000 a year; 6000 new locomotives after a period of four years would mean that between 3200 and 4000 of them would merely replace the locomotives worn out in the meantime, and a serious shortage would still exist (see *Nazi Germany Can't Win*, pp. 271-272). But as there is still the shortage of 5000, this means that no less than twenty per cent of the 25,000 locomotives needed in Germany are missing.

In the meantime, however, Germany's frontiers have extended, and the annexed districts also need replacements: for instance, the war in Poland caused the destruction of many Polish locomotives and placed an excessive strain on Germany's own rolling stock. The locomotive repair works in what was formerly Czechoslovakia are busy repairing damaged tanks and other motor vehicles from the Polish war, and generally the Nazi tank and motor park is reported to have been in a very bad state. In addition the extra burden placed on the German railway system by the Four Year Plan has resulted in great wear and tear for its 20,000 locomotives, which is the present park as compared with 26,700 in 1926. In the peak year of prosperity 1929 the German railway carried 486 million tons; by 1938 the total was 510 million tons, drawn by considerably fewer locomotives and less efficient rolling stock. In 1929 Germany's locomotives

travelled 685 million kilometres, and 912 million kilometres in 1937.

Every locomotive, every carriage, and every wagon in Nazi Germany's railway park is excessively used, and there are no reserves. The building programme provided for 10,000 passenger carriages and 112,000 goods wagons for the next four years, but owing to the outbreak of war this programme cannot now be adhered to, although the carriages and wagons will be more necessary in war-time than ever. Under the circumstances it is not difficult to imagine that Germany's traditionally cautious railway policy is being abandoned, and that in consequence many risks are being taken which often lead to accidents.

Then, as we have already said, the railwaymen are overworked. Many of them have been called up for military service, and the rest have to work longer hours. There has been one great railway movement of troops to Poland, troop movements to Slovakia, troop movements to Czechoslovakia to deal with the unrest there, then the great movement of troops from the east to the west after the crushing of Polish resistance, and two movements of troops to the Belgian and Dutch frontiers. The troops did not remain at their posts throughout the whole of the winter, and there was a considerable amount of to-and-fro transport.

On top of all this it would now appear that the Government has to face acts of sabotage. A report from South Germany speaks of a long troop train which was forced to halt for hours on the open track because all its axles had run hot owing to lack of greasing, although it is quite possible that inferior

"*Ersatz*" axle-grease was used. The Swiss railway authorities have reported that two trains which should have arrived from Nazi Germany in Basle on a certain day in the middle of January did not arrive at all. Delays on the German lines were so common that people were told not to take any notice of the official time-tables, but to wait patiently for their trains in the hope that they would arrive. Thus it is not a matter of occasional delays owing to accidents, but a permanent phenomenon. The same thing is reported from Lithuania, where trains from Germany frequently arrive eight and more hours late.

We may take it that this state of affairs will not improve as long as the war lasts. In November a credit of 500 million marks was found for the railways, but for urgent repairs only, and not for the purchase of supplementary rolling stock, etc., for which, in any case, there is a great shortage of materials.

It is important to note that the accident which took place towards the end of December near Genthin, and claimed over 200 lives, was to a troop train. When "lightning wars" are under way troop transports have to take place quickly to guard against discovery from the air. This is greatly hampered when the railway system is subject to constant accidents and resultant delays. Passenger traffic in Nazi Germany has been very much reduced in order to economize coal, and to release locomotives for transport and goods traffic purposes. Germany has a great many locomotives which are so built as to be equally suitable for either passenger or goods traffic. The issue of cheap tickets and

excursion tickets has been cut down considerably, and in many cases abolished altogether. In circumstances like this the weaknesses of the railway system might easily result in dislocating a whole offensive programme.

### *The Coal Shortage*

Even before the beginning of the war Nazi Germany was suffering from a very real shortage of coal. This is an astonishing thing in a country which is one of the biggest producers of coal in the world, but it becomes understandable when we remember that a very considerable part of the new "*Ersatz*" industries depends on coal. Above all, the hydrogenation of coal for the production of synthetic oil demands enormous quantities of coal. "German iron" produced from inferior ores with a low ferrous content often has to be worked twice instead of once before it is of any use. The position is the same with other German ores. Despite this, however, the extension of Germany's mines should have provided sufficient raw material.

This is theoretically quite correct when certain other factors are left out of account, such as time, capital, and labour, but a reckoning in which three important factors are left out can never be correct. For instance, the coal mines of western Germany have very deep workings, and it is not possible to sink new pits in a short space of time. No doubt at a pinch the capital question could be solved, as it is always solved in Nazi Germany, by compulsion or pressure, but available capital has to be invested in iron, timber, metals, and other materials of which there is an acute shortage. The shortage of these

materials is more acute than ever now the war is on, because they are required in large quantities for guns and munitions.

The most difficult problem is that of providing the necessary labour-power. Available labour-power has been greatly reduced by the calling up of masses of men for military service, and a large percentage of unskilled labour has now to be used. Even before the war the shortage of labour was a big problem, and almost all mines reported decreasing prosperity and decreasing production because of the lack of trained men. For a time the gap was made up by lengthening the working day without any special increase in wages, but the final result was a still further drop in production. Industrial investigators are well aware of the deleterious results of discontent and overwork, but in addition to this there is a considerable amount of "ca' canny" on the part of the workers hostile to the Nazi regime.

Things got so bad that in April 1939 the authorities were compelled to abandon their principle of stable wages, and grant wage increases to the miners; in the meantime overtime payments, etc., have also been reintroduced, because heavy manual workers were quite unable to do the increased work required of them with the food they could buy on their old wages.

The drop in production also had material causes. More coal can be produced when further districts are opened up, but this means an increased investment of capital, and an increased employment of labour-power without resulting in any immediate increase in production. Further, coal can also be

obtained from deeper and more outlying veins, but this also increases production costs and demands more labour-power. The worker who earns higher wages in Nazi Germany can buy only very little more with the extra money, and is thus hardly able to meet the increased demands made on his strength. All these things combine to reduce production. This was proved during the World War.

Now the economic system does not consist of isolated branches of production: they all co-operate to make the whole. Coal must not only be produced, but when it is produced it must also be transported. It is a cheap mass product and it requires a great deal of railway space. This is one of the reasons why there is already an acute coal shortage in Germany despite the fact that every possible economy is being practised. Nazi Germany's stores of coal ought to last for some time to come, and the economics ought to have produced a sufficient surplus for a war waged at a low level of intensity. Referring to a regulation issued by the Reich's Coal Bureau concerning the increase of production and an improvement of distribution, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* wrote towards the end of December:

"The pressing problem of coal is neither production nor allocation, but the question of transport."

Here is the vicious circle: for an increased production of locomotives and rolling stock more coal (and iron) is necessary, but in order to obtain more coal increased numbers of locomotives and wagons are necessary to transport it.

The inadequate system of coal transport is now being supplemented by the transport of coal in

motor-lorries, but this consumes more petrol, and more petrol has to be produced with further great quantities of coal. Big towns in Nazi Germany are already practically denuded of coal stocks. When the situation gets so bad that something just has to be done a few trainloads of coal are sent to Berlin at Goering's special order, where they are demonstratively unloaded by the Hitler Youth. Naturally, such trainloads of coal were not originally intended for Berlin, with the result that they are missing elsewhere.

Wood as a substitute for coal is unobtainable because all possible timber is used for the production of cellulose and other important materials. Timber has long been promoted to the ranks of the "important war materials."

The shortage of coal becomes most pressing in winter, when not only the industrialist but the private citizen depends on coal. Both of them have to go short, and in fact the industrialist is relatively worse off than the private citizen.

The decline in efficiency on the German railways began to make itself felt in the sphere of distribution as early as the autumn of 1938. The production of ligneous coal had been increased (which is a much easier task than to increase the production of ordinary hard coal, because most of the ligneous coal is dug from or near the surface), but it was then found that the railways were not in a position to transport the increased quantities. The big "Michel - Kohlenkonzern," which published its report on the 1938 working year towards the end of 1939 only, reports that its production of ligneous coal was five per cent above the record level of 1928,



but that the transport of this increased production met with difficulties owing to the shortage of railway wagons.

On 5th January last the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* published an article dealing with the state of the German railways. According to its information there have been no capital investments in recent years, the rolling stock and all other material has been subjected to excessive strain, and the working plan has been speeded up. In order to supply Berlin with coal the authorities have been compelled to recruit the services of the Army, of the Air Force, and of Polish prisoners. Arrangements for the supply of supplementary rolling stock are in their infancy only. A "Transport Chief" had been appointed, but—

"In view of the multiplicity of authoritative offices 'controlling economy,' and judging from the experience of other similar specially appointed chiefs, the chances of the new Transport Chief to bring about any fundamental restoration of the hard-hit transport system must be judged very cautiously."

More or less the same picture can be obtained incidentally from the reports of the German State Railways themselves for 1939, although, of course, much more careful language is used.

Since the outbreak of the war the rest of the world has not heard very much from inside Nazi Germany, whose propaganda authorities take every possible care to see that no unfavourable news leaks out, but what we do hear confirms the result of a detailed and careful investigation of the coal industry—namely, that *the biggest coal-producing country in*

*Europe, and the second-biggest coal-producing country in the world after the United States, is now suffering from a coal shortage.* This shortage is the inevitable result of the Nazi system. It may be that for the moment the greatest possible economy coupled with the forced limitation of exports owing to the blockade are keeping things going, but if demand is greatly accelerated, as it was in 1917 by the "Hindenburg Programme," then collapse will swiftly follow here too.

### *Iron, Oil, and Other Materials*

The system of autarchy, or economic self-sufficiency, which was to have made Nazi Germany impregnable against any blockade, has, in fact, made her into one of the most vulnerable countries, and the guidance of her economic destinies is developing into an increasingly difficult feat of jugglery. When the railway system breaks down there is no coal, and no foodstuffs. Potatoes freeze on the line. Petrol cannot be had from the Balkan countries by road route because these countries cannot provide the transport. If there is no coal the railways cannot be repaired, because without coal there is no iron. The development of the Hermann Goering Works is held up because there is a shortage of coal and iron. And then the lack of materials falls back on to the other industries. In the building trades iron has largely been replaced by timber, but now there is a shortage of timber for the mines, and the managements are compelled either to use inferior timber or expensive timber, of which there is then a still more acute shortage elsewhere. Nazi Germany is no longer able to import

the requisite timber for the production of cellulose, so her scientists have had to develop a process to obtain cellulose from other varieties of timber. The result is that Germany is now very short of wood spirit, a valuable by-product, and prices are sent rocketing by the more expensive timber on the one hand and the shortage of wood spirit on the other.

It is impossible to review the economic difficulties produced by the war in every field individually. All branches of the economic system are inter-dependent, and not one of them can function without the others. All other countries have reserves in all parts of the world from which they can meet emergencies. *It is not even true to say that Nazi Germany is chiefly hit by the British naval blockade; she has been hardest hit of all by a much bigger blockade—a self-imposed one: her attempts to introduce complete economic self-sufficiency.* The German authorities are well aware of this, and very often they have pointed out that Nazi Germany's experiment in economic self-sufficiency makes it imperative for her to have peace.

It is perfectly true that Nazi Germany urgently requires peace, but she wants it on her own terms, namely, a dictated peace which would make economic self-sufficiency confined to the frontiers of the present Reich unnecessary. A Germany which controlled a subjugated Europe, with colonies and protectorates throughout the world, would dominate the whole world for a very long time; the thousand-years Reich bombastically proclaimed by Hitler in 1933 would then dawn. For Nazi Germany war is a bottle-neck in her development

through which she must pass—carefully if possible, but with utter recklessness if necessary.

It is not the aim of this book to give a full picture of the position and development of the German economic system up to the time of writing. As far as this was necessary it was done in *Nazi Germany Can't Win*. Our aim now is to show how the opinions then expressed have fared under the influence of the war, whether they have been confirmed or disproved.

### *Iron*

1. Germany is already short of iron;
2. This shortage will greatly increase in war-time, because:
  - (a) the existing labour shortage will become more acute;
  - (b) it will not be possible to keep plant in the same repair in war-time as in peace-time;
  - (c) transport will be greatly curtailed; and
  - (d) demand will become greater, owing in particular to motorization;
3. The construction of the Hermann Goering Works can be continued only very slowly. . . .
4. Germany will have to keep Italy supplied with iron in the event of war, and probably the new works in what was formerly Czechoslovakia, and in Austria also."

(*Nazi Germany Can't Win*, p. 289.)

Let us now examine these points. Even before the beginning of the war there was an acute shortage of labour-power in Nazi Germany, because the production of substitutes demands considerably more workers than normal production. The extension of war-production, coupled with the calling-up of many men for military service, has

now greatly increased the shortage. During the World War it was possible to exempt many skilled workers from military service because the war was not so highly mechanized as it is to-day. Modern warfare now demands increasing numbers of engineers, mechanics, and skilled men in general, and for this reason there has been vigorous propaganda in Nazi Germany for some years to persuade engineers and other experts to place themselves on the list for a reserve of officers. Since the outbreak of the present war great numbers of engineers have been drafted into the army, with the result that industry is short of engineers and of all kinds of skilled technicians. The newspapers in Nazi Germany are now full of advertisements for such men, and on a single day the Nazi *Voelkischer Beobachter* had no less than two and a half of its enormous pages full of advertisements, put in by innumerable firms, including big undertakings like the Mannesmann Steel Corporation, electrical works, aeroplane factories, and so on. Although there are very few men available for the posts, firms are still advertising, and there is a wild scramble for suitable men.

The situation with regard to workers is much the same, and later on we shall see that the shortage is so great that it is even causing deviations from the legally established wage policy of the Nazis. At the end of December 1939 the big iron branch of the Flick concern published a report on the blast furnaces in Luebeck, pointing out that although the plant had been greatly extended it was not possible to utilize it to capacity owing to the shortage of labour.

We have already dealt with the question of current repairs when discussing the German railways, and it suffices to say that the situation is exactly the same in all branches of industry. It is analogous to that of the last years of the World War, when all plant and equipment stood greatly in need of thorough overhauling and repairs, and big works were constantly complaining that production was being held up by frequent breakdowns of machinery. When the railways are calling for repairs and there is no material available for the purpose, then the position is necessarily the same in the iron and steel industry.

Nazi Germany's transport difficulties are already well known, particularly in connection with the distribution of coal, and this is rendered still worse by the fact that she has to provide Fascist Italy with coal as well. It is known that when the blockade of Nazi-German exports was introduced certain concessions were made in the case of German coal shipped via Belgian harbours. Smaller works are no longer receiving supplies of iron, and even bigger works like the "Arbed," a German-Luxemburg concern, have had to reduce production and even close down temporarily owing to the iron shortage. Towards the end of December 1939 it was reported that numerous smaller works had to close down on account of the shortage of material. What material there is goes to the big concerns, and the *Lokalanzeiger* writes:

"The concentration of all available raw materials and skilled workmen in the big undertakings, such as Krupps, the Vereinigte Stahlwerke, the Hermann Goering Works and Rheinmetall-Borsig, was unfair."

But what are the Nazi authorities to do when there is not enough material to go round? The fact is that the bigger concerns can make more economical use of the material. On 7th December the *Neue Züricher Zeitung* reported:

“The German armament boom has led, as is generally known, to an acute shortage of iron and steel, and Germany’s iron works are by no means in a position to meet the demand. In order to alleviate the situation a systematic campaign for the collection of all forms of old iron, etc., has been going on. Not only are all surplus metal goods collected from private households, but last year the railings in public parks and squares were taken for the purpose. This campaign is being continued, and this year all metal signs, placards, old gas standards, iron and cast-iron objects of every description are to be collected.”

The prophesied delay in the completion of the Hermann Goering Works has already come about. Production is continuing only in those works which were already completed when they were taken over; the main plant of the new works, whose production was to make iron imports unnecessary, is still incomplete.

We do not know the extent to which Nazi Germany has agreed to supply Fascist Italy with iron. Italy is still a neutral, and as she has not committed herself she is being treated with extreme care and consideration by all the belligerent Powers. Despite the shortage of coal in Nazi Germany large quantities are still being sent to Italy, and it therefore seems quite possible that large iron exports are also going there. From Italy come the first reports

that two big firms like Krupp and Borsig, which are always preferentially treated in the matter of raw materials, have been compelled to stop making machinery for the synthetic production of oil, and that the whole Four Year Plan has been held up. The German naval authorities are reported to be complaining that material delivered to them is of flimsy construction.

In the so-called Protectorates, the iron works have had to cut their production down by one-third owing to the chronic shortage of raw materials. Armament factories are now being compelled to use "*Ersatz*" materials. The shortage is even greater because the works in the Protectorates often do not receive the inadequate supplies of materials allotted to them. Where such supplies go through Germany they risk confiscation on the way.

In war-time news is scarce, and the periodical reports of the big industrial and other undertakings, from which the experienced observer can generally learn more than from the newspapers, are being published later than usual. However, from those reports we already have we can see that our calculations concerning a likely shortage of many raw materials in Nazi Germany were correct. Germany is already suffering from a lack of iron despite the fact that the conditions under which the war is being waged do not demand any very great expenditure of material, and that modern warfare has not yet developed in all its intensity.

Then there is the question of the blockade. Commenting on the September speech of Goering, a French semi-official statement pointed out correctly that out of a total consumption of 32



million tons of iron, Germany imports about 23 million tons. Iron is exported from Sweden to Germany, and it is still being sent despite the blockade, though iron ores from Spain, North Africa, France, Greece, etc., are no longer available. It is now intended to sink new pits in Sweden, but that will be difficult in war-time. The hope of importing large quantities of iron from Soviet Russia has proved illusory.

Before the war the Nazis were loud in their boasts that Germany was invulnerable with regard to oil supplies owing to the fact that she could produce synthetic oil from her coal. The production of synthetic oil is by no means a new process, and it has been going on for a number of years, but nevertheless between 1933 and 1937 Nazi Germany's imports of oil increased by seventy per cent, and between 1933 and 1938 by as much as eighty-five per cent. These figures suggest that even if the Nazis vigorously push the production of synthetic oil they will not be able to alter the import situation very much in the near future. The plant at present in use has a maximum capacity of 2·8 million tons annually, but even this cannot be used to the full owing to transport difficulties and the shortage of coal. It is even reported that to-day production is only about 1·5 million tons reckoned over the year.

However, that is not the most important thing; in 1938, which is the last year for which more or less reliable figures are available, Nazi Germany's oil imports amounted to almost 5,000,000 tons. In 1939 imports were increased still further. Of this, 3000 tons a day (we may reckon 300 days in

the year) are said to come from Roumania. This is approximately a million tons as compared with well under half a million tons formerly. However, the other sources of supply (overseas) have now been cut off. Further, there is much doubt as to whether Roumanian supplies will arrive satisfactorily because the difficulties of transport on the Danube are very great. For several months in the year transport on the Danube is impossible, and the transport of the oil through the part of Poland occupied by Soviet Russia has not proved very easy. The primary difficulty is the shortage of tank wagons—*i.e.* the railway question again. The problem is not made easier by the fact that, according to the latest reports, the quantity to be supplied by Roumania is to be increased to 1.5 million tons, and, if possible, even to 2 million tons. The Nazis have enough difficulty in transporting 3000 tons a day, so that the transport of these greatly increased quantities will prove correspondingly more difficult, and the difficulty will remain even when the Danube is no longer frozen.

Even the 3000 tons a day delivery is by no means simple. By the end of 1939 the price of oil per wagon had risen from between 8000 and 10,000 lei to between 30,000 and 32,000 lei per wagon. Roumania is also anxious to deliver other goods, and oil supplies stand in a certain proportion to these other goods, so that owing to the increase in the price of petrol Nazi Germany is by agreement bound to take a larger quantity of Roumania's other export goods. Nazi Germany has already concluded various trade agreements in recent years which afterwards proved impossible to carry

out. In the last resort she must pay for the goods she receives in some way or other, even if it is only in goods. She has no great surplus of the export goods which Roumania would be willing to take, and owing to the increase in the prices of imports from Roumania there must be a corresponding increase in the quantities of goods to be delivered by Nazi Germany.

Further, the higher freight rates on the Danube must be taken into consideration. A very considerable number of the barges belong to British and French firms, or have been chartered by them and laid up. The effect of all this has been that even German refineries have had to close down. The "Rhenania-Ossag," which had a new refinery in course of construction, has had to stop work on it owing to the shortage of oil.

All in all, it can be said that if Roumania has actually delivered two million tons of oil, three further million tons are still missing, and that is a question of the peace-time consumption of 1938, whereas the consumption of oil in war-time must be several times greater.

In his valuable book *La Mobilization Industrielle* (*Industrial Mobilization*) Possony reckons the oil consumption of an offensive war in the air coupled with a defensive war on land over a front of about 600 miles at between 30 and 40 million tons a year, and the same quantities for an offensive on land coupled with defensive operations in the air. Taking Possony's calculations into consideration with the calculations of other experts we can reckon that Nazi Germany's present war requirements would be put conservatively at 18 million

tons annually. Now between this figure and Nazi Germany's actual oil supplies there is a vast gap. Even if we assume that she gets her 5 million tons by imports, succeeds in producing about 1 million tons by normal methods, and a further 2·8 million tons by synthetic methods, there still remains a big shortage. The *Neue Züricher Zeitung* calculates that Nazi Germany can meet about one-fifth of her war-time requirements by domestic production, and that she must import the remainder. About 4 million tons usually imported from overseas sources are now quite lost to her; for instance, 2·1 million tons of her oil came from Venezuela, Mexico, and the United States.

*The acute petrol shortage and the impossibility of finding any satisfactory solution for it were the main reasons for the peace proposals made after the Polish campaign, and for the winter defensive; it is one of the main reasons why Nazi Germany has waged the war in a manner quite different from what was expected of her, and from what her own generals prophesied and considered necessary.*

### *Other Raw Materials and Foodstuffs*

At the end of August 1939 German newspapers published the report of the great metal concern Metallgesellschaft A.G., in Frankfort-on-Main, pointing out with some satisfaction that owing to her tremendous rearmament Germany had become the biggest consumer of metal in the world. To-day they would probably be glad if she were not. Whereas in 1929 she consumed 13 per cent of the world's metal, whilst the United States consumed

42 per cent, and Great Britain 12 per cent, in 1938 she consumed 22 per cent, the United States 21 per cent, and Great Britain 15 per cent. At the same time the volume of world metal consumption increased from 682,000 M2 to 776,000 M2.

Germany's imports of finished metals on the other hand declined from 45 per cent of the total consumption to 22 per cent, because since 1929 the production of aluminium has increased fivefold. However, 22 per cent of the annual consumption represents about the same quantity owing to the doubling of consumption since 1929. This amount has now been almost completely cut off by the blockade. Even the 7000 tons (approximately) of copper which normally come from Finland will presumably be missing temporarily. Aluminium was introduced in particular as a substitute for copper, and 180,000 tons of aluminium were produced in 1938 in Nazi Germany as against only 130,000 tons in the United States. In 1939 Nazi Germany's aluminium production probably rose to approximately 200,000 tons. However, towards the end of 1939 it was seen that even aluminium supplies were insufficient. Aluminium is used chiefly in the aero industry, and its production demands large quantities of electrical power, which, for Germany, means more coal. Because of the shortage the use of aluminium for certain things has been prohibited, and other metals have been substituted.

There is no need to deal with all the other fields on which Nazi Germany is suffering from a shortage of materials; the facts are already quite well known, and the effects of the shortage are not so serious as

those with which we have already dealt. Nazi Germany is quite definitely suffering from a deficiency of foodstuffs, but the World War showed us how far a country can cut down its consumption of important foodstuffs. Nowadays the German people are used to shortage, because for the past seven years, since the accession of the Nazis to power, they have been accustomed to get on with less and less nourishment. The great care with which the Nazi authorities have prepared for rationing will also help to prevent disturbances and to avoid real danger to the continued existence of the Nazi system. Then there is the ceaseless wave of propaganda which seeks to convince the German people that thanks to a "counter-blockade" things in Great Britain are worse if anything than in Germany.

Our aim is to show that Nazi Germany is suffering from a shortage on all fields, and that the shortage has been intensified by the coming of war. It is possible that the country could struggle along somehow in peace-time, but it certainly cannot stand the strain of a "real war" if it comes. Nazi Germany is short of leather, and leather substitutes are in vogue. She is short of textiles, and consumption has to be cut to the bone because in this case there is a serious lack of substitute materials as well. The food-cards in the possession of Germany's citizens entitle them to amounts which they seldom if ever actually receive. *However, it would be rash to predict that victory can come exclusively from her shortage of important materials.*

*The Dislocation of the Labour Market*

Since the beginning of the war Nazi Germany has been suffering from a phenomenon typical of a disorganized economic system: a shortage of workers on some fields and a surplus on others. In an economic system which is still functioning normally such an anomaly gradually straightens itself out. Forcible measures can also be taken to alleviate the situation, but only at the expense of successful working. The rapid extension of certain war industries in recent years has resulted in a shortage of labour-power, and this has made itself felt increasingly during the past year. In other industries, such as textiles, boot and shoe production, confectionery and retail trade, workers have been dismissed. But as it is not possible to re-train workers quickly these unemployed men and women have not been drafted to the industries suffering from shortage.

Of course, this problem is not an insoluble one, but it does show that it is by no means easy to meet the shortage of labour-power in the war industries. Taking the year 1928 at 100, Nazi Germany's industrial production is now said to be 137. The production of consumption goods, however, is only 113.1, whilst the turnover in retail trade is only 95.2. In other words, retail traders are selling less than they sold years ago although wage income is claimed to have greatly increased.

Tens of thousands of independent artisans and small business men have therefore been forced to close down their businesses and dismiss their employees, who were to do more important work.

But now that general mobilization has taken place the shortage of labour-power will run into millions and the problem will become insoluble.

The shortage of labour-power has had the effect of strengthening the position of the workers, and they have again begun to put forward demands. The Nazi authorities have had to give way to them in many cases, and the most important preventive measure against inflation, the reduction of wages and salaries in war-time, has had to be abandoned. In fact, in some cases the authorities have been compelled to approve wage increases, though this has not always been done openly, but under all sorts of camouflage. Overtime is now being paid extra again, and working hours are limited.

Now in order to adapt the increased purchasing power of the workers to the diminishing production of consumption goods it is proposed to pay them partly in coupons which can be liquidated only after the end of the war. Inflation is absolutely certain in Nazi Germany sooner or later and therefore the German worker knows from the beginning that these coupons are worthless. No doubt in time we shall hear how he has reacted to this new trick.

### *Nazi Germany's Finance System*

It is not much use going into the details of Nazi Germany's finance system. Suffice it to say that the Nazi authorities will always succeed somehow in obtaining the money they need for domestic purposes. As we have just seen, they propose even to pay their workers in part in worthless coupons. Payments abroad represent a different matter, and



Nazi Germany is now adopting the most extraordinary expedients, more extraordinary even than those adopted by Schacht. For instance, in order to avoid having to pay for 4000 tank wagons from Roumania the Nazis demanded them for nothing as compensation for wagons left behind in Roumania after the 1918 collapse. They seem to have been exercising unusual modesty in not asking for compensation for the petrol in the wagons at the time, which they were unable to carry off. And in order to obtain a few million dinar from the Yugoslav Government the Prince of Thurn and Taxis, whose lands were expropriated as the result of a Land Reform Bill adopted in Yugoslavia, was encouraged to begin a process against the Yugoslav State. As the German Government was behind him, and as the case was heard before the German courts, the Prince naturally won it.

Behind every business arrangement forced on to the neutral countries to-day by Nazi Germany there is the threat of invasion. This was the only way in which the Nazis could persuade Roumania to increase her supplies of oil to Germany. This method will work just as long as Nazi Germany is still in a position to threaten, but the moment she begins to suffer defeats the situation will change. Nazi Germany's supplies from abroad will dwindle to a trickle in a very short space of time once the neutral countries (which are already quite used to going without cash) realize that not merely are they to get no goods in exchange, but that the pistol levelled at their heads is empty.

## *Chapter Eight*

### NAZI GERMANY'S NEW TACTICS

THE theories of "totalitarian warfare" and "lightning war," which dominated military discussion after the World War, were developed by the military experts of those countries which were financially and materially weak. It is not surprising therefore that the chief upholders of these theories are to be found in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Fascist Italy was amongst the victor States at the end of the World War, but she was always a poor country. Germany was impoverished by the war, and the Treaty of Versailles imposed strict limitations on her armaments and on the number of men she could keep under arms.

It is interesting to note therefore that General von Seeckt, the organizer of the 100,000-strong army which Germany was entitled to maintain after the World War, was responsible for the theory of the small, but highly trained army which would be superior to the cumbrous mass armies of other countries. This theory was an obvious example of making a virtue of necessity, and, in fact, it was abandoned in Germany the first moment it became possible to create a larger army. Pride of place in German military discussion was then given to the theory of "lightning war" in conjunction with "totalitarian warfare."

It must not be overlooked, however, that these theories had a rather more solid basis than the provisions of the Versailles Treaty alone. During

the World War it was demonstrated very clearly that big armies contained the germ of internal social demoralization. This danger was to be avoided in the future by small mercenary armies of long-service men completely cut off from all connection with politics. Now although General von Seeckt maintained his theory towards the rest of the world he was not so enamoured of it himself, and he was, in fact, one of the prime movers in the development of the so-called "Black Reichswehr," an illegal and secret formation intended to supplement the Reichswehr strength in excess of treaty provisions. In reality the small and highly trained Reichswehr was intended as the hard core of a much larger army to be formed before and during the next war.

To-day many things have changed in Germany. Whereas formerly the backbone of the army was to have been this core of highly trained and completely unpolitical soldiers, whilst the flesh of the army would have consisted of men normally exposed in civilian life to political influences, to-day the backbone of the army is, or is supposed to be, the political organizations of the National Socialist Party. Formerly safety was sought in banning politics altogether, to-day it is sought in an intensive, but one-sided, National Socialist politicalization of the army. It is, of course, almost unnecessary to point out that the German nationalist reaction which formerly completely controlled the army did not mean that politics were to be banned altogether, but that only its own brand of politics should have any influence in the army. The "politics" with which the soldier and the future

soldier was to have nothing to do were the democratic politics of the Weimar Republic. That was "politics"; the ideas of German Nationalism were not "politics."

It must not be forgotten that the "Black Reichswehr" was tolerated by the British and French authorities at a time when its existence was notorious both inside and outside Germany. They seemed to regard the Reichswehr generals and their reactionary politics as a bulwark against "Bolshevism." As it happened, they led straight to National Socialism and the Hitler regime. In Germany everyone who openly criticized the secret armaments of the authorities (or even of the Nazis) was clapped into gaol for treason!

"Totalitarian warfare" means the harnessing of the whole country and all its resources in the service of war, the subordination of peace-time economy to the needs of war, and the unrestricted use of every available weapon and every available method to secure victory once war breaks out. These ideas developed in Germany with the declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare, the use of poison gas, and the preparations for the great struggles of 1918 with their enormous expenditure of material. The so-called "Hindenburg Programme," whose instigator was really General von Ludendorff, was intended to turn the whole of Germany into one vast armament works. All the economic resources of the country were to be mobilized, and everything was to go to satisfy the needs of the front, with the exception of a bare minimum for domestic purposes.

These methods were resurrected in Germany

after the accession of the Nazis to power in 1933, and from then on Nazi Germany was practically under a system of "*Wehrwirtschaft*,"<sup>1</sup> as Fascist Italy is to-day. "*Wehrwirtschaft*" is the preparatory stage of war economy proper, and it is so organized that at a moment's notice the economic system can swing over to "*Kriegswirtschaft*," or war economy. The transitional period lies between the two, and before the outbreak of the present war Germany passed into this transitional period.

### *The Weaknesses of "Wehrwirtschaft"*

The system of "*Wehrwirtschaft*" has a number of weaknesses which tend to neutralize its advantages. One of the most important is the problem of industrial location. In a normal economic system, industries find their location according to purely economic considerations, or, at least, the main tendency is that they should. In a "*Wehrwirtschaft*," on the other hand, industries are located according to considerations of security and military expediency. This often leads to a lowering of production and to an increase in production costs. In particular, longer distances often enhance transport costs. The same sort of thing is caused by "self-sufficiency" in a "*Wehrwirtschaft*," because the production of goods according to this principle is not guided by considerations of cost and quality, but purely by the principle of supply at all costs. Domestic

<sup>1</sup> "*Wehrwirtschaft*," or Defence Economy literally, is in reality a less intense form of war economy, in which certain goods for civil consumption are still being produced which would not be produced in war-time, when a system of "*Kriegswirtschaft*," or war economy proper, would be introduced.—Tr.

reserves of raw materials and foodstuffs are exploited to the full even in peace-time in order to keep big works in a state of constant war-preparedness. This is also necessary in order to spare the foreign exchange balance as far as possible, which is brought into a parlous condition in any case by the uneconomic system of "*Wehrwirtschaft*." For a country which no longer imports can also not export, and a country whose industries are burdened with increased production costs for these reasons cannot hope to compete on the world market.

The aim of the system of "*Wehrwirtschaft*" is to cut down as far as possible the transitional period from peace-time to war-time economy. The advantage of "*Wehrwirtschaft*" is that it prepares a country for war in the shortest possible space of time, but the great disadvantage is that when the country is prepared for war its preparation is rendered less effective by the weaknesses inherent in any system of "*Wehrwirtschaft*." In the present war we can see that clearly in the weaknesses of Nazi Germany's transport system, her foodstuffs problem, the shortage of raw materials, and the unsatisfactory state of her people's health.

The weakness of those countries which do not go in for a highly developed system of "*Wehrwirtschaft*" is that it takes a long time for them to switch their peace-time economic system over to war-time needs. Those countries which practise "*Wehrwirtschaft*" can more speedily transform their "war potential" into effective war strength, whilst those countries whose economic systems remain primarily peace economies down to the outbreak of war take longer to reach their effective war strength, but

once they have done so it is stronger, because they have not been previously exhausted by the demands of "*Wehrwirtschaft*."

This difference is underlined by the fact that "*Wehrwirtschaft*" has been primarily employed by just those countries which were economically weak in the first place. Their aim was to secure a more speedy preparation for war in order to neutralize their weakness. This speedy preparation was to make "lightning war" possible, by means of which they hoped to lay their enemy low before he could transform his essentially stronger "war potential" into effective war strength. Before the enemy could do this, the theory went, the invader would burst through his defences and prevent his ever doing it, by disorganizing his transport and industrial system with terrific air attacks, etc. The "lightning war" was to prevent the enemy's "war potential" from ever being transformed into effective war strength.

The ideal situation is reached when every man, and every woman too, is harnessed into the service of "*Wehrwirtschaft*" and, when the moment comes, of war economy proper. The last vestiges of peacetime economy are extinguished, and the last ounce of material used in the service of war preparations. Then the "lightning war" has the greatest prospect of success.

Although the economic system is working like clockwork there are no longer any reserves which could be drawn upon in the event of failure. When the period prepared for has passed and victory has not been won, further fight is useless.

*The "Lightning War" that Wasn't*

The present war has exploded the theory of "lightning war," and it is unlikely that it will ever recover. It is true that the war against Poland began in this fashion, but the Polish campaign was only part of a larger undertaking. The war proper has not really begun on the main front, or at least not as most people envisaged it.

The reason for this on Nazi Germany's side is that the economic screw has already been overwound. Intensive "*Wehrwirtschaft*" has already so weakened war potential that it is no longer possible to turn it satisfactorily into effective war strength at the level required. The short war in Poland so reduced Nazi Germany's effective war strength that there was no hope whatever of a "lightning war" succeeding in the west. The weeks which were obviously leading up to the outbreak of war, and the weeks taken up by the Polish campaign, gave the Western Powers time to transform their war potential into effective war strength to such an extent that any attempt at "lightning war" against them would have involved fearful risk.

The second reason is the "all-out" level at which Nazi Germany's war economy is now working. Seeing that she has had no opportunity of preventing the mobilization of the Western Powers and of preventing them from turning their war potential in considerable part into effective war strength, her own economic system is now threatened by enemy action, and enemy air attack on a large scale might easily make any further prosecution of the



war impossible. It depended largely on the skill and daring of the enemy (both unknown factors), and on his good luck, whether he could destroy important parts of Nazi Germany's war machine.

Despite the redistribution of Germany's industries the most important parts of her war industries are still concentrated in the Rhineland and in the Ruhr district. If Nazi Germany had attacked Holland or Belgium immediately after the crushing of Poland, the Western Powers would have had a still easier job in attacking Germany's most vital industrial areas and economic centres. The congestion which could have been caused on the railways, and the destruction of a certain number of important works, might have made it impossible for Nazi Germany to wage war for months. Even the possibility of such destruction might have had the same effect. In his *Air Power in the Next War* J. M. Spaight writes:

"Even if the works are not destroyed or seriously damaged, the effect of raids and alarms of raids may be to interrupt and disorganize the production of munitions to a disastrous extent. . . . It is difficult, says Group Captain J. C. Slessor (*Air Power and Armies*, 1936), to resist the conclusion that intensive and continued air bombardment can restrict the output of the war industries to such a degree as to make it impossible to meet the requirements of an army on the 1918 model in weapons, ammunition, and war stores. If after the second battle of Ypres in 1917 we had concentrated every available bomber on raiding the industrial centres of Germany during the autumn and winter it is doubtful, he considers, whether the

German attack of 21st March 1918 could ever have materialized."

In another place the author gives quotations which clearly show that even the threat of raids has the effect of slowing down production:

"Official figures, says Mr Jones (*The War in the Air*), for some raids show that when an attack was in progress 75 per cent of the munition workers in areas warned of the coming attack ceased work, and that the output continued to be restricted for about twenty-four hours after the raid was over."

And in another place figures are quoted to show that during the raid on Woolwich Arsenal on the night of 24th-25th September 1917 the production of munitions .303 fell from 850,000 to 140,000 per shift.

To-day there is no doubt that the forces at the disposal of the defence are greater, but at the same time the attacking forces are also very much stronger. It is certainly very difficult to hit individual objectives, such as railway stations, bridgeheads, and smaller factories, with any great degree of accuracy, but it would be almost impossible to miss the enormous industrial plant which is spread out over the Rhineland and Westphalia. Not every raid will do vital damage, but any raid might, and this very possibility would undoubtedly go far towards dislocating production.

In my opinion this is one of the main reasons why the Nazi leaders did not put their theory of a necessary invasion of Belgium and Holland into operation after the crushing of Poland. Another reason why there has been no "lightning war" in the west is to be found less in the sphere of Nazi

Germany's war industries than in the sphere of her available weapons and equipment. Any attempt at a break-through where modern defences are concerned would require an enormous amount of material. Writing in the *Revue Militaire Générale*, General Brossé of the French Army declares:

"In any future conflict attacking infantry will be completely unable to shift defending forces having at their disposal a powerful armament of defensive weapons, unless they themselves are supported by very powerful material resources, very considerably stronger resources than was considered necessary during the last phase of the World War." <sup>1</sup>

Nazi Germany's theory of attack is based on mass effect intensified to the utmost degree. Her military leaders have gone back to Schlieffen, and they accept his advice:

"The question: how should an enemy's flank be attacked, has often been formulated by Count Schlieffen, and his answer was always: 'Not with one Corps, or even with two, but with a whole Army, or even several Armies.'" <sup>2</sup>

This applies not only to flanking attacks, but to any attack. German theory demands the attack "with all available forces." According to German military calculations a break-through attempt requires a length of front extending over at least 30 kilometres, or almost 20 miles, and 40 first-line tanks must be employed per kilometre of front (General von Eimannsberger in *Wissen und Wehr*, in July 1938). That would mean at least 1200

<sup>1</sup> *La Revue Générale Militaire*, No. 6, June 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by General von Erfurth in his book, *Ueberraschung im Kriege* (*The Element of Surprise in Warfare*).

first-line tanks. In addition there would be the "accompanying armour," or armoured vehicles in which supporting infantry are sent, whilst strong forces of aeroplanes per kilometre would have to be used to defeat the anti-tank defence. Behind all this there would then be second-line tanks, reserve tanks, etc. The equipment necessary for such an attempt represents an arsenal in itself, and therefore General von Eimannsberger writes:

"Such a method of waging warfare will demand the greatest possible effort, and it will rapidly use up the forces engaged. It will depend on the relation of forces whether such a large-scale attack can lead to the desired conclusion, to the rapid and complete collapse of the enemy, or whether the attacking forces prove inadequate to the task, and break themselves against the enemy's defence, causing the drive to lose its impetus, and finally to come to an exhausted halt."

In another passage of this article he writes:

"It is clear that such operations need power behind them, as much power as possible, and in any case more than the enemy can concentrate in time to meet them. Armoured divisions are necessary for the spear-head of the drive, and behind them supplementary divisions (motorized infantry and artillery) to occupy and consolidate the territory won. And aeroplanes and still more aeroplanes, because without victory over the battlefield movement on the battlefield must soon cease."

General Guderian, who commanded Germany's Armoured Divisions in Poland, writes in his book *Die Panzertruppen (Armoured Troops)*:

"All the advantages gained up till then (the

moment when the enemy tanks go into action) will be neutralized unless it is found possible to destroy the enemy's anti-tank defence and then his tanks."

According to German military theories, therefore, vast quantities of equipment and material must be used in any attempt at a break-through, even if it is not directed against such powerful fortifications as the Maginot Line, but merely against ordinary defences. It is in any case quite clear that such an attack would have no hope of success against the Maginot Line. Eimannsberger admits this, but consoles himself with the idea that:

"It is quite certain that both sides will do everything possible to avoid siege warfare, or, at least, to develop it as quickly as possible into other and more mobile fighting operations."

German military theories now demand that the German Army shall find some way out for itself into open country, for instance through Belgium and Holland. The fact that this task has not been attempted, or not yet been attempted, is sufficient indication that Nazi Germany's military leaders are well aware of the enormous risk involved once they set such great forces into movement. They would be risking their destruction by the enemy in one single battle. In the event of failure the enemy might definitely establish superiority. With an enemy imposing a blockade whilst he himself enjoys open seaways, this would mean that any further struggle was quite hopeless.

From this we can appreciate what a horrible shock it must have been to the Nazi leaders when

they finally realized that a German invasion of Holland would mean war with Belgium as well. They believed that they would be able to finish off Holland very quickly and without very serious losses. Belgium's turn would then have come, and the task of subduing her would have been very much easier after the conquest of Holland because the conditions for a subsequent invasion of Belgium would have been greatly improved thereby. Behind Belgium would have been the united Anglo-French forces, and they would have had to be defeated as well. But the German High Command had no guarantee that they would meet the German forces under the conditions laid down in German theory—*i.e.* that they would abandon the protection of the Maginot Line, come out into the open to be defeated by the German forces, and then retire in great disorder even beyond their original defences.

For these reasons the Nazis once again toyed with the idea of attacking Belgium first during the second crisis, and leaving Holland alone for the moment. The biggest forces were therefore concentrated on the Belgian frontier, and the documents found by the Belgians indicated that the first objective was an invasion of Belgium.

It is an old rule that the defender will avoid as far as possible anything likely to favour the attacker. The Belgians were unwilling to fight alone and be defeated, so they turned to the Dutch, and the two countries united into a much more formidable barrier, whilst the Franco-British forces felt no inclination whatever to challenge the German forces on their own terms, and thus to play into the hands

of the German High Command and its urgent need for a rapid decision.

*The War in the Air*

Neither side did anything to provoke the other into launching an air offensive, which would certainly have resulted in tremendous destruction on both sides, though there is no doubt that the heaviest damage would have been suffered by Nazi Germany, owing to the "all-out" level at which her economic system is now functioning, and to her lack of reserves. This is the reason why the Nazis have quite signally lost their desire for an offensive after having boasted and boasted about what they were going to do to their enemies. A terrific offensive had been declared to be the absolute *sine qua non* of victory in the west, and Eimannsberger, giving the reasons why his tank-aeroplane offensive must be launched, writes:

"Because to-day, as always, we must strive to bring any campaign to a rapid and successful conclusion by short, sharp, and decisive battles. These battles must be fought simultaneously on land and in the air, or there can be no chance of victory."

Goering's air arm was the pride of Nazi Germany's new model army, and if anything could bring movement into a solidified front it was thought to be this. It was Goering's planes which opened up the way for the tanks in Poland, and got them out of difficulties when they were "stuck." However, there was no possibility of using the air arm on the Western Front with the same success

as attended its ruthless use in Poland against an incomparably weaker enemy. It is quite certain that in the event of mass air attacks some of the bombers will get through even the most powerfully organized defence, and the boastful announcement made by the Nazi leaders after their summer manœuvres that no plane would be able to penetrate their defences was just eye-wash. If the Nazis really did not know it themselves at the time, they know it now.

For the moment the bombers which Nazi Germany sends out on bombing expeditions have to go without fighting planes to protect them, and this considerably limits their utility. So long as this circumstance continues to operate the defence will always be at an advantage because its fighter machines can operate within easy reach of their own bases. Now the British and French air bases in France are nearer to Germany's vulnerable industrial districts than the German air bases are to Great Britain's important industrial districts. The reconnaissance flights of German bombers to the British coasts which have been given out to the world as the proof of Nazi Germany's "command of the sea" were, of course, nothing but tip-and-run incidents. The war in the air to date is a very modest affair; neither the possibilities of attack nor defence have yet been even approximately exploited.

The real war in the air is still in the preparatory stage. Both sides are feverishly building up their air forces in the hope of being able to outbid their opponents when the time comes. In the beginning it is very probable that Nazi Germany had an advantage in the air, at least with regard to numbers.



To-day it is probable that this initial numerical advantage has already been neutralized by the Allied Powers, particularly as they have the support of the American and Canadian aero industries.

The air arm is the favourite weapon of the weaker side, because it promises him a chance of getting the upper hand. It is the weapon for surprises, and it overcomes space and time. On the other hand, it has very distinct disadvantages. The aeroplane is a vulnerable weapon. The aeroplane cannot stand the hammering a ship or even a tank can take. And even after a tank has been stopped it is still very often a valuable ally as a barrier and protection for the infantry. Once a plane has been shot down it is finished.

The first question that arises is: against what objectives are the planes to be used? In battle on land they play at the utmost a rôle of equal importance with the other arms engaged. For the moment, at least, there is no likelihood of success for breakthrough operations on the Western Front, and therefore there is no prospect of any pursuit operations in which the aeroplane, as experience during the World War, and in Abyssinia and Poland, has shown, can play a decisive rôle. All that remains therefore is the destruction of objectives behind the enemy's lines, the bombing of troop concentrations before an offensive, co-operation in the air defence against enemy attack, and co-operation in the war at sea.

There is no likelihood of an offensive at the moment, and the gains which Germany has achieved so far in the war at sea are not so encouraging. Nor are they likely to increase in the future, particularly

now that the Western Powers have decided to arm even their smaller vessels defensively. In order to hit a small vessel like a trawler, and they have suffered most to date, an aeroplane must fly very low, and if the vessel is armed there will be considerable risk in the attack. Attacks on the enemy's hinterland will not prove easy, and mass attacks are liable to suffer very heavy losses. The heavier the bomber the slower its speed compared with that of the tremendously fast fighter plane. Effective armour-plating would still further increase weight and lower speed. Speed is the best defence of the bomber, just as it is the best attack of the fighter.

If an attacker is to have any hope of securing a real success he must first establish command of the air, a task which the German Army found comparatively easy in Poland. Against Great Britain a difficult task is rendered still more difficult by the fact that the fighter's radius of action is much shorter than that of the bomber, so that it is not possible to protect the raiding bombers with fighter squadrons, whereas they must count on having to face British fighter squadrons operating within easy reach of their home bases. And finally, the anti-aircraft batteries and other anti-aircraft defences must not be forgotten.

Air victories are not likely to be permanent where big Powers are concerned, particularly where only small sections of the enemy air forces are engaged. Further, aeroplanes can be built very rapidly, particularly by the Western Powers, so that a hard-won air victory can be neutralized in a very short space of time unless it leads to really tremendous destruction in enemy countries, which is unlikely.

Objectives of military importance are very difficult to hit from the air, particularly when the air defence is fairly efficient. In his book *Luftmacht* (*Air Power*) Fischer von Poturzyn declares that in the area within a square drawn from Bucharest to Bordeaux to Liverpool to Koenigsberg and back there are no less than 15,000 military objectives which the belligerent Powers would have to bomb. For her share in these operations he calculates that France would need 10,000 first-line bombers, 20,000 pilots, between 80,000 and 150,000 mechanics, etc., and 250,000 factory workers. Such an air strength is beyond the capacity of France. It is also beyond the capacity of Nazi Germany.

Gas warfare from the air such as the Italians practised against half-naked people in Abyssinia is not possible against an enemy well equipped and well prepared. It might be possible against a fleeing enemy, but not against the industrial districts of a powerful State.

Even so, air warfare can do a great deal of damage. But as things stand to-day the greater part of the damage is likely to be suffered by Nazi Germany, and not by the Western Powers, because Nazi Germany's industrial areas are well within reach of enemy bombers who can attack protected by fighter planes.

### *The War at Sea*

The hesitant prosecution of the present war is not extraordinary, and it could even have been foreseen if the lessons of the last war had been

studied sufficiently. Before the World War the strength of a fleet was calculated according to the number of modern battleships it possessed, and these ships were the pride of all seafaring nations who maintained big navies. The two big sea Powers concerned, Great Britain and Germany, were disappointed when they found that in real warfare their capital ships had to stay in harbour and eat their exorbitantly expensive heads off. Only on one occasion did they really go into action, and that was at the Battle of Jutland, or, as the Germans call it, the Battle of Skagerrak. This big battle did not prove conclusive and had no effect on the upshot of the war. All that happened was that both sides took even greater care than before to keep their costly vessels still more isolated from the rough outside world.

Great Britain built her gigantic fleet to protect her own coasts and keep open her seaways. Germany built herself a powerful fleet to protect herself against Great Britain's fleet. The bigger the ship the bigger its artillery, and the safer its protection. The result was unforeseen. The German fleet kept to its harbours because it feared it might be overwhelmed by the more powerful British fleet, thus leaving its own coasts open to enemy bombardment. The British fleet did not put to sea because in the meantime a new enemy had appeared, the submarine. The effect of the submarine weapon may be judged best from the experience of the naval outing which took place on 19th August 1916 as reported by Commander Russell Grenfell in his book *Sea Power*:

"In the early morning of 19th August, the Grand

Fleet was steaming south not far from the coast of England. The Commander-in-Chief had information which pointed clearly to the High Seas Fleet being at sea and somewhere to the south-eastward of him. He also knew that the *Nottingham*, one of the advanced cruisers 20 to 30 miles ahead of him, had been either torpedoed or mined, and the report of an enemy submarine had just reached him. On the strength of this comparatively meagre indication of possible submarine danger ahead, he turned his fleet round and steamed away to the northward for about two hours. When we remember that the High Seas Fleet was out, that its destruction was the cornerstone of our naval strategy, and that after the disappointing outcome of the Battle of Jutland only two months before, Jellicoe must have been particularly keen to get another chance at the enemy, we get some idea of the powerful deterrent effect that the underwater menace must have had on his mind to induce him to turn north at such a time."

It must be remembered that the British Grand Fleet had an absolute and decisive majority of 28 capital ships against 17 German capital ships. The reason for the great care lavished on the Grand Fleet is clear: its vessels were enormously expensive and on them rested the protection of the British Empire as a whole. The calculation of Germany's naval strategists when they built a fleet with a "nuisance value" whose destruction might prove too costly for the British Navy, was not badly made.

The German attitude was different. A defeat for the German Navy might have opened up the

German coasts to bombardment. But the continued existence of small surface craft, which played a similar role in the Battle of Jutland to that of the problematical submarines on 19th August 1916, together with submarines, would probably have kept the Grand Fleet at a respectful distance from Germany's shores, quite apart from the fact that a well-defended coast is very difficult to attack from the sea.

A modern battleship is a floating fortress and it costs an enormous sum to build. Millions of pounds of naval power can go to the bottom within a few minutes as the result of a well-aimed torpedo, and it has already happened more than once in this war. Further, it takes such a long time to build big ships that losses sustained cannot be replaced during anything but a very long war. For these reasons there are theorists who would like to abolish the capital ship altogether in favour of increased numbers of smaller surface craft. For the price of a battleship a flotilla of destroyers can be built and kept on the seas, a point of considerable importance.

The big vessels, which have not yet taken any part in the war, have been given other tasks. They protect Great Britain's seaways. With their enormous range they can sail to the farthest corner of the world, whereas smaller vessels could not, or only with great difficulty. The gunnery of the bigger vessels is more accurate than that of the smaller craft, and since 1918 their speed has been increased.

However, these advantages are very little compared with the depreciation they have undergone,

mainly owing to their size and costliness. During the World War they went into action against the enemy only once, and to-day their prospect of engaging the enemy is less than ever, because Nazi Germany does not possess a fleet of capital ships of any commensurate size. A former German naval officer once observed sarcastically that the only reason for building capital ships seemed to be to give admirals something proportionate in size to their exalted rank. It is certainly true that the position for Great Britain and her Allies would be considerably more unpleasant to-day if instead of expending large sums on the few big ships she possesses now Nazi Germany had spent the money on building up a big fleet of submarines.

The result of recent maritime development is that the great spectacular expression of naval warfare, big naval battles, seems to have become a thing of the past, and this fact was not altered by the recent battle off the River Plate. It is true that its result was important and that the victory of the three small vessels over the much bigger and more heavily armed *Graf von Spee* was surprising, but the affair still remains a minor engagement fought by comparatively small vessels.

The important vessels to-day are small ships, even smaller ships than those engaged in the River Plate battle. German submarines and an occasional commerce raider are the hornets which are making things unpleasant for Allied shipping. These vessels are comparatively cheap to build, and they can be built and replaced fairly rapidly. They can also be built in large numbers. On the other hand, their enemies, the destroyers and other

small surface craft which escort convoys, can also be built in large numbers.

The particularly daring action which freed the British merchant seamen held on board the Nazi *Altmark* in Norwegian territorial waters was also carried out by a destroyer. Over 300 British seamen, prisoners of the *Graf Spee*, were freed. Important as the rescue was from the political point of view (even here, of course, considerable risk was involved), the British Admiralty would hardly have risked one or more big ships in the venture, exposing them perhaps to the risk of falling an easy prey to waiting submarines. Under such circumstances the rescue of the British seamen might have caused the deaths of thousands of others and the loss of perhaps one or more ships.

Here we have the big difference between the war on land and the war at sea. Although no big battles have taken place at sea, nevertheless the naval war is being fought out grimly. On land the enemy's army must be destroyed before he can be forced to his knees. The development of mechanical warfare (which must also be understood to include the modern technique of fortifications) has led to the solidifying of the fronts. It is impossible to let the tank, which is the land counterpart of the destroyer and the submarine, attack on its own. The tank can attack only in whole "flotillas" and these are liable to rapid destruction.

At sea a few small vessels might well bring about decisive changes in the relation of forces. A single submarine can destroy a cruiser, or even a number of cruisers if it is in luck. It can also sink hundreds



of thousands of tons of merchant shipping, and here the comparison with the tank ceases.

The growing power of the defence at sea has caused Nazi Germany to use even smaller units than the submarine. Aeroplanes are now attacking shipping, and aeroplanes are laying mines. The Nazi leaders hoped that the aeroplane would bring about a radical change in warfare both on land and at sea. In one of his speeches Hitler referred to mine-sowing from the air and described it as a terrible weapon. It was that for a short time, and it might become so again in individual cases, but as a weapon to be used on a big scale it cannot prove decisive.

We have not yet reached the limit of possibilities in aerial warfare. Like the war in general, it did not begin as most people expected. In the air, as on land, attack and defence hold the balance and make any big undertaking a very risky affair, at least in this stage of the war. In 1918 Germany possessed considerably improved incendiary bombs, but she did not use them because she feared their use against herself, and at the time she was in such straits that she needed the production of all her factories and would have been hard hit by the loss of any of them as the result of enemy air action.

The war at sea is already far advanced as compared with the war on land. Mechanism led to a full stop at sea first of all, and it was at sea that a new type of weapon was first found to break the deadlock. Once the floating fortress had proved vulnerable, its place was taken by smaller vessels which could be built in large numbers. The land

fortresses of the Maginot Line have not yet been destroyed by smaller, mobile forts. Perhaps the risk for the attacking side is too great. Further, there is already a very effective defence against the tank, the anti-tank gun.

### *Commercial Warfare and the Blockade*

The aim of an aggressive war is to extend the power of the aggressor State to the territory of the State or States attacked. Behind the façade of power politics there are always economic aims. Such aims may be the direct extension of the economic area of the attacking State—for instance, Nazi Germany declares that she must extend her “vital space.” Or the war may be waged to secure economic or political concessions, which in their turn involve certain economic advantages. In order to attain these aims the will of the aggressor State must be imposed on the attacked State or States, and if resistance is offered it must be crushed. This is the aim of the “war of annihilation” which is preached in all Nazi-German military publications.

But from the beginning of the war in the west Nazi Germany has found herself faced with another problem. Her leaders had not overlooked it, but they had hoped that they would be able to neutralize its effects. Her military leaders had drawn up plans for a “lightning war,” and its success was to solve the problem of the blockade and the war of commerce in the good old military style. Once the British and French armies were defeated on the Continent, Great Britain would lose her bases

on the European mainland and her blockade would be ineffective.

Up to the moment the Western Powers have shown no inclination to play into Hitler's hands and facilitate his far-reaching strategic aims. The Maginot Line is the strongest card in their joint defence against Nazi Germany's military strategy. The Maginot Line prevents Hitler's armies from bursting into France. It delimits Germany's military activities, and at sea her naval activities are circumscribed by the British and French fleets.

In order to carry on a big war Nazi Germany needs large quantities of raw materials which she cannot obtain within her own frontiers. She is also unable to feed herself from her own resources. Even before the war her efforts were therefore directed to extending what she called her "vital space," and to building up around herself a ring of more or less dependent States which would perforce continue to supply her with foodstuffs and raw materials even in the event of war, because they would be under the direct threat of German invasion. Dr Grävell, Director of the Reich's Statistical Office, has pointed out that Nazi Germany's trading possibilities could be limited or cut off by the action of other States in the event of war, and that this situation would have to be changed. He writes:

"If these consequences are not to come about—*i.e.* if a country is to avoid this dependence—then the mere possibility of purchase must be supplemented by a guarantee of permanence; in other words a guarantee that the would-be purchaser

could avail himself of the existing possibility of purchase at any time and in any situation.”<sup>1</sup>

Grävell then makes it quite clear that this means that the prospective seller may not sell his goods to any other would-be purchaser. That is the meaning of “vital space.” The consequences would be far-reaching. Czechoslovakia, Austria, and now Poland, have learnt what they are to their cost. Nazi Germany's theoreticians have gone so far as to include the Baltic States and Scandinavia within this “vital space,” and they have even worked out how much guarantee of security and permanence they would have if the whole of Europe were included in their “vital space.” Over and above this, there were, of course, the usual demands for colonies, but colonies were considered to be of secondary importance because in the event of war it might prove impossible to hold them.

The arrogance of this demand for absolute security is obvious, and it is clear that there is not a country in the world which enjoys an absolute guarantee against its sources of supplies being cut off by enemy action in the event of war. The Nazis admit this themselves indirectly when they pretend that they are blockading Great Britain successfully. In Nazi Germany's case the guarantee is impossible of attainment because there can be no “peaceful” conquest of the neighbouring States.

The aim of the commerce war and the blockade is to cut off Nazi Germany from her essential supplies and thus make it impossible for her to wage a first-class war on land.

This is the reason why more is happening at

<sup>1</sup> Necker, *Nazi Germany Can't Win*, p. 127.

sea to-day than on land. At the last moment Nazi Germany tried to make the blockade nugatory by her pact with Soviet Russia, though no doubt the responsible Nazi authorities were under no illusions as to Soviet Russia's limited power to deliver the goods, and as to her limited desire to do so. The pact was intended more as a means of putting pressure on the Western Powers with a view to avoiding the extension of the Polish conflict to the west.

The question arises: how far has Nazi Germany actually succeeded in extending her "vital space"? In 1914 the Central Powers, Germany and Austro-Hungary, controlled the area of present-day Poland, Czechoslovakia, parts of Yugoslavia and parts of Italy. In addition there were Bulgaria and Turkey, and parts of Roumania. During the war itself all Poland was conquered, and was followed by the present Baltic States, and then Ukrainia.

When we look at Nazi Germany's "vital space" we find that it is smaller on the whole than it was before the World War, apart from Soviet Russia, which can in any case hardly be included, but which might play a role as a source of supplies. The countries in question are not devastated areas to-day as they were, at least in part, during the World War, but as against that they no longer need sell their goods exclusively to Nazi Germany, and an important part of the policy of the Western Powers is their war of commerce. They not only sink German ships and confiscate German goods, but they also buy up goods which Nazi Germany might otherwise obtain.

Faced with the question of defeat or retirement

altogether the Nazis are now seeking to gain time by a reckless and unrestricted campaign against all and sundry. Both submarines and aeroplanes are now sinking vessels at sight on the high seas, irrespective of whether they are British and French vessels, or neutrals, for neutral shipping might be used to carry goods to Great Britain and France. At the same time this campaign of sinking neutral shipping is also part of Nazi Germany's efforts to intimidate the neutral countries and force them into her orbit of influence.

It is difficult to estimate the quantitative success of the sinkings. Nazi Germany is obtaining some goods through other channels than the normal ones. Both sides have published figures of sinkings, but they do not tally. Up to the end of January, Nazi Germany reported that she had sunk a million tons of shipping, whilst Great Britain admitted a loss of 456,000 tons, but pointed out that if captured German tonnage, chartered tonnage, and new launchings were taken into account the total debit would amount to 122,000 tons only. However, these figures do not tell us everything, because in war-time ships are used differently. Ships sailing in convoy need more time, far more time, for their journeys. For instance, if they needed twice as much time as formerly, then two ships would be necessary where one was enough before. On the other hand, better use of available shipping is being made to-day, and old vessels, and vessels that were formerly laid up, are now in commission again. Further, the composition of imports is changing: chief importance is laid on war goods, whilst less necessary goods are being cut down. In addition,

ships which were formerly engaged in carrying German goods are now available for Allied purposes, and there were quite a lot of them.

To draw up detailed statistics of the effects of the blockade would be almost as difficult as to calculate the national income of a country, a point which always gives rise to much debate. The import of non-essential goods can be still further reduced, as well as the transport of passengers. Further vessels can be chartered or purchased, and new vessels built both at home and abroad, so that quite a wide margin is available. Before the war some experts reckoned that war would be impossible because the vast amount of materials necessary would not be available. War has nevertheless broken out. All the calculations which seek to prove that at a certain point the Western Powers will be compelled to give in for lack of shipping tonnage are in the same category. Nazi Germany has practically no tonnage at all on the high seas. Her "*Ersatz*" production is quite unable to meet her calculated needs, but nevertheless she is waging war and obtaining materials in various ways. Both sides suffer from supply weaknesses, and both sides will find ways and means of overcoming them, though by far the greater weaknesses are on Nazi Germany's side.

The blockade which was instituted at the beginning of the war, and which had been foreseen by the Nazis, was also one of the reasons for the peace kites flown by Hitler and Goering after the end of the Polish campaign. Hitler and his generals fear a war which they have no hope of being able to end on their own terms. The Western Powers have refrained up to now from waging war on land with

any real intensity apparently because they wish to let the blockade have a chance of weakening Germany, but Hitler and his friends are not waging intensive warfare because they are well aware that they have not the means to do so. Here is another reason why the war on land is so different from what people expected and from what has always been the traditional form of land warfare between the two great military powers, France and Germany.

Nazi Germany is now striving to shift the weight of the war from the military to the political field, and she still hopes to save herself by political manœuvres.

### *The War of Political Manœuvres*

In the era of Absolutism, armies and wars were the undisputed province of Absolutist rulers. They were paid for primarily out of their own resources, for "*L'Etat, c'est moi.*" The army was kept supplied by permanent army depots established at definite points over the country, and these points were fortified. Ludwig Renn writes:

"If the army was too far away from any depot there was a danger of overtiring the horses, and that meant irregularity in the supply of provisions and ammunition. Thus each depot had an area in which the task of provisioning the army devolved upon it, and that area would be larger or smaller according to its transport facilities, but it would always be limited." <sup>1</sup>

Under such circumstances hostilities could be

<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Renn, *Warfare*. Translated by Edward Fitzgerald. Faber & Faber, London, 1939.



conducted only within reach of the supply depots, unless it was found possible to capture the supply depots of the enemy. This circumstance dominated the strategy of the day. Armies were expensive. The rank-and-file had to be recruited and paid for by the Absolutist rulers. The generals of the day had no particular interest in fighting big battles and sustaining heavy losses which would deprive them of men who were difficult to replace; their aim therefore was to manœuvre the enemy out of his supply area and to capture it if possible. Ludwig Renn writes:

“The essence of the manœuvre strategy of the Absolutist era consisted in one army trying to deprive the other of its depots, to which end it laid siege to them. The main task of the other army was then to drive off the attackers and raise the siege. However, as neither Commander was anxious to risk too many men in a pitched battle, they preferred to threaten each other with move and counter-move rather than attack.”<sup>1</sup>

In order to break away from the limits of this form of strategy Maria Theresa of Austria recruited the so-called Pandours, who “lived off the land” in the areas they ravaged, and (again according to Renn) the Prussian king Frederick the Great had to abandon his manœuvre strategy and fight them.

In later years armies were placed on a broader financial basis, becoming a matter for the State as a whole, whilst the introduction of compulsory military service by most countries made soldiers less difficult to come by and assured military

<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Renn, *Warfare*. Translated by Edward Fitzgerald. Faber & Faber, London, 1939.

commanders a plentiful supply of cannon-fodder. The development of the means of transport, and in particular the railways, made armies less dependent on special territorially-limited supply depots, and therefore manœuvre warfare based on the depot system became less important. It was no longer necessary to avoid battle in order to spare the lives of men, and war could be carried into the country of the enemy without the restrictions previously imposed on it. It was the general arming of the people introduced by the French Revolution which made it possible for Napoleon to wage his wars at such great distances from his base, and Prussia succeeded in defeating him when she too had introduced general military service.

To-day wars have again become a very expensive matter even although the costs are borne by whole peoples. We saw in 1918 that even economic systems could collapse under the burdens imposed by warfare. Overstrain on the technical side of warfare must exhaust even rich countries. Although modern railways can transport men quickly enough, their main problem has become one of quantity, because great masses of men have now to be transported. Towards the end of 1938 the railways of Nazi Germany broke down right in the middle of her preparations for war. This can also happen to the "supply depots," under which we must now understand the whole economic system of a country. They become exhausted under the strain of war.

From this angle also we must conclude that to venture on big battles involving an enormous expenditure of material represents a big risk to the attacking party, and that they must be avoided as

far as possible unless the attacking party is prepared to stake everything on the result of one throw.

The result is that *warfare is returning once again to a new form of "manœuvre strategy."*

Part of the strategy upheld by Germany's military theorists with their "great battle of annihilation" was that the deployment of the enemy's strength must be interrupted and his mobilization disturbed—*i.e.* his depots destroyed. The means for doing this were first of all the introduction of "*Wehrwirtschaft*," secondly, "permanent mobilization," and thirdly the "lightning war" which the first two made possible. The answer of the French to this plan was the Maginot Line, which protected the "depot France" from being seized by the enemy. France became a great fortified depot, and Nazi Germany became the same by surrounding herself on all sides with powerful fortifications. Great Britain answered with an intensified form of blockade. Now as the mass armies of our day need much greater room in which to move than the small armies of the eighteenth century, and as room is limited on all sides, the possibilities of military operations have been reduced to a minimum, practically to an impossibility. It is difficult for the competent observer to see any hope of a decision being fought out on the military field.

Nazi Germany's generals reckoned that all the belligerent Powers would be anxious to free themselves from the limitations of siege warfare, and that in his efforts to do so the enemy would give them the chance of striking him a fatal blow. Hard reality has decided against the generals and

in favour of the politicians. The first stage of the present war is being fought out primarily on the political field rather than on the battle-field, except where, as at sea, other opportunities of waging hostilities present themselves. The most active participator in these political manœuvres is Nazi Germany, because she is hardest pressed. At first Hitler did his utmost by every possible political manœuvre to avoid war in the west altogether, and the pact with Soviet Russia was his chief card. It seemed impossible to the Nazis that the Western Powers would go to war under such circumstances, and there seemed a fair chance, too, that even the "minor war" in Poland might be avoided, if only Poland would let herself be intimidated in time.

Hitler's next step was the flying of his peace kites, sent up first by Italy and then by himself. On the heels of these attempts, and, in part, parallel with them, went the attempts to drive a wedge between Great Britain and France. Great Britain was to be manœuvred away from her Continental "depot," France. Then attempts were made to intimidate the neutrals in order to force them into the Nazi camp. In this case the manœuvre was carried out hand-in-hand with preparations to exploit every military possibility, and powerful forces were marshalled on the Dutch and Belgian frontiers ready to invade the Low Countries as soon as they showed the faintest sign of weakness. If the moment had been opportune the political-manœuvre war would have been abandoned at once in favour of some other form of war.

On the side of the Allied Powers the treaty with

Turkey was one of the important steps in the manœuvre war. A powerful wall was erected against Nazi Germany's expansionist tendencies in the Balkans. Soviet Russia, as a pact partner of Nazi Germany, was also hit. This was the reason for the generous credits granted at once to Turkey as against the meagre assistance granted to hard-pressed Poland a few months earlier. The Allied assistance for Finland also hit Soviet Russia primarily as a pact partner of Nazi Germany. We may take it that the moral justification claimed for the Allied attitude is not, in fact, the most important reason for it.

Even the war against Poland was not a fundamental break with the principle of the political-manœuvre war (not that there is really such a thing as principle involved, it is all a question of practice). Nazi Germany hoped by ruthlessness to create the necessary *fait accompli* as rapidly as possible and then to be able to turn to political manœuvres against the Allies. Soviet Russia also went in for political manœuvring when she secured a foothold in the Baltic States. The war against Finland was introduced in the same fashion: not as warfare but as "peaceable agreement." Up to the present there have been no indications that Soviet Russia proposed to go any further than to provide herself with certain tangible guarantees against an attack which, as we shall see later, was, and still is, quite within the bounds of possibility.

The war of political manœuvre is not yet at an end, and we still do not know what may come. Hitler has shown himself to be very ingenious and utterly without scruples. Having regard to the

aspirations of both Soviet Russia and Fascist Italy, the Balkans still offer a wide field for political manœuvring. Mussolini's Italy is being treated with extreme politeness by all parties, and she is not failing to exploit the favourable situation. She refuses to declare herself for either of the belligerent camps at the moment, and she is leaving herself time to pursue her own ends, while she increases her armaments and earns big war profits. She is maintaining a benevolent neutrality towards Hitler, but at the same time she is holding herself sufficiently aloof to go over to the other side as soon as the situation seems to call for it.

There is nothing fundamentally new in all this, and such factors have played a role in previous wars too. But in this war political manœuvring has been more important than military operations up to the present. The enormous increase in the strength of both offensive and defensive weapons has caused a new weapon to develop and come to the fore, a weapon with which each side is striving to alter the relation of forces sufficiently to permit a return to military weapons and the knock-out blow.

### *Nazi Germany's "Allies"*

We have already quoted the opinion of General Wetzell to the effect that any future war would necessarily be a war waged in alliance. Believing this, the Nazis were early in their efforts to find suitable allies. They sought them primarily in countries whose ruling system was more or less similar to their own. Even before he came to power Hitler maintained certain relations with

Fascist Italy. When he made his peace with Poland at the beginning of 1934 it created a sensation almost as great as that produced by the subsequent pact with Soviet Russia, because up to then Poland had played the role of "hereditary enemy" to Germany, and she was allied with France. The end of this alliance was a salutary warning for other "friends" of Nazi Germany. Hungary and Yugoslavia were the next countries on the list to be wooed and drawn into a German alliance. They "belonged," as they were frequently told, to Nazi Germany's "vital space," and it was their duty to adapt themselves to it without cavil. On more than one occasion it was prophesied that they would join the Berlin-Rome Axis, but they preferred to hold on loosely to one end of the Axis rather than to attach themselves firmly to it. The fate of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland was a lesson to them.

But an even greater deterrent was Nazi Germany's obvious insolvency. No country likes being paid for its goods in millions of mouth-organs, no matter how musical its citizens may be. Aspirin in vast quantities is also not quite the thing for relatively healthy peasant peoples not overmuch troubled with megrims. And from Nazi Germany's standpoint these little countries were regarded more as vassals to supply Germany with her needs under all circumstances rather than as equal military allies. Relations between Nazi Germany and these countries were close, mutual State visits were made, but in the end no formal alliances were concluded.

Japan did her best to extract advantage from a common hostility to Soviet Russia and Great

Britain, but she withdrew in good time when the conclusion of the Soviet pact offered her an excuse. However, we must not believe that there has now been a final breach between the two countries on account of this ideological difference. Japan will continue to accept the assistance of Nazi Germany wherever possible, and in return she will no doubt be prepared to do Nazi Germany whatever favours she can. The new Cabinet formed in Japan in January immediately declared itself in favour of the Axis policy. But Japan is already so weakened by the long campaign in China that she cannot afford to undertake any further military obligations.

Fascist Italy is in much the same position. With regard to her claims to Nice, Savoy, Tunis, and Corsica she is favourably placed against a France involved in war, especially when her relations with Spain and Germany are taken into consideration. However, it is only on the map that this relationship appears to be so advantageous, since Spain has been enormously weakened by her civil war and Germany is now at war herself. Italy has by her position in the Mediterranean a distinct advantage over Great Britain. The bottle-neck between Italy and the African coast, through which all shipping to the east and west must pass, can easily be closed. In this channel lies the small island of Pantellaria, a new Malta, whose fortifications and air bases can block the passage of vessels on both sides. In addition, it must be remembered that Italy's submarine fleet is even bigger than Germany's.

Fascist Italy has seized on every possible advantage accruing to her from her alliance with Nazi Germany. Without Germany's friendship her



conquest of Abyssinia would have been impossible. However, this very conquest has considerably endangered her position. To-day she can still be cut off from the high seas at Gibraltar and the Suez Canal, but she can also be cut off from a very important part of her own empire, Abyssinia. Nazi Germany can render her no assistance there. The Spanish ally of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy is undoubtedly aware of her own weakness, and she is therefore very unlikely to attempt any seizure of Gibraltar as her two allies have suggested. A belligerent Italy on Germany's side would have no outlet on to the High Seas from the Mediterranean, whereas although perhaps Great Britain would be unable to use the Mediterranean she could at least maintain secure, if more lengthy, communications with all parts of her Empire along other routes, and even France need not necessarily use the Mediterranean route.

Must Italy therefore be considered an opponent of Nazi Germany? Not at all, and she has, in fact, afforded her cautious assistance at every turn. During the Czech crises it was always Mussolini who informed the world of what was coming and advised it to accept Nazi Germany's actions as absolutely inevitable. The same was true of the Polish crisis. On 14th September 1938 Mussolini wrote an open letter to Lord Runciman assuring him that Hitler did not desire the incorporation of a single Czech in his Reich, and in August 1939 the controlled Italian Press supported Hitler's demands against Poland to the top of its bent.

The situation has not changed since. Even after the outbreak of hostilities it was Fascist Italy which

put forward peace proposals designed to end the war in Germany's favour at Poland's expense. If these terms had been accepted the Axis would have emerged stronger than ever. Why Fascist Italy took no actual part in the fighting was explained cautiously, but clearly enough, in the speech delivered by her Foreign Minister, Count Ciano, on 16th December 1939. At the time the treaty of alliance was signed, 7th May 1939 (a treaty which provided for unity of command in the event of war, even in the event of a war of aggression), the signatories had been quite clear as to the desirability of maintaining the peace of the world for a long time. They had also harboured no intention of disturbing it. However, it had been clear that the security and peace of Europe could be maintained and consolidated only if the just aspirations of Italy and Germany were properly appreciated and satisfied. This period of peace had been estimated at three years by Italy, and at between four and five years by Germany.

At the end of this period, therefore, the two thought they would be in a position to launch their attack in the event of the Western Powers still refusing to grant their demands. As it turned out, Nazi Germany was not in a position to wait all this time because she would have collapsed economically long before. Italy was too weak to sustain a real war, or her rulers calculated that she was likely to get more out of a waiting game. We may assume that she needed peace far more than she needed war, and Hitler therefore suffered the same disappointment as the Kaiser before him.

However, this does not prevent Fascist Italy's

going as far in co-operation with Nazi Germany as her own interests demand. She is supplying Germany with goods and is herself receiving supplies from Germany. She is seconding the Nazis wherever she can and she is deliberately leaving the world in doubt as to when a decision, one way or the other, may be expected—just as before the war, the world is still being assured that Italy is prepared for any eventuality, and that her army is ready for action at a moment's notice. Last January, Fascist Italy budgeted for 436 million pounds sterling, including 135.5 million pounds for the army, navy, and air force, and such an enormous budget (for her) suggests very practical preparations for war.

In November 1939 the Duce instructed all Italian students to keep their rifles by their sides at their studies, and the Secretary of the Fascist Party declared on 17th January last that Italy was continuing to work for the strengthening and consolidation of her aspirations, and for the execution of the plan to build up a new order in Europe on the basis of the greatest possible measure of justice. He expressly warned his hearers against being misled by the frequent expressions of sympathy to which Italy was now being treated abroad.

That might have referred to the Western Powers, but it might also have referred to Germany. Probably these oracular utterances are intended to apply to both sides. Fascist Italy will finally go over to the side which is victorious. At the beginning of the war Mussolini appointed a Commander-in-Chief for his army, and if the Germans had launched a successful offensive against the Maginot Line,

or if the Western Powers had succumbed to Hitler's peace blandishments, he would have come out strongly on Nazi Germany's side.

In 1930 I was on board a vessel in the Baltic near Stockholm with an Italian journalist, who mentioned enviously that Sweden, although it was a much bigger country than Italy, had a population of only six millions. Italy, he declared, must expand territorially because of her large population. This was the period in which the Italian Press was delivering the first sharp attacks on France. When I asked him whether his country thought of going to war to support its demands he declared:

"I was in the last war, and no one who was in that is likely to go into another one with much enthusiasm. However, sound and fury is part and parcel of the game. It need not necessarily lead to war. The other side can get nervous before it comes to that."

That is Hitler's whole policy in a nutshell, except that Fascist Italy has already conquered more than she can comfortably digest, and she is weaker than Nazi Germany, so weak, in fact, that she is not in a position to wage a big war at all. Of course, the situation would change if during the course of this war the Western Powers were greatly weakened by some lucky accident (lucky for Germany and Italy, that is). However, in the meantime Nazi Germany has had to do without the Italian divisions with which she had hoped to keep France occupied from the south, another circumstance which has caused the war on land to run to earth.

Italy is continuing her conquests, which for the moment are still peaceful—at least, they are pro-

ceeding without bloodshed. Whilst Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia are both busy elsewhere, she is extending and consolidating her position in the Balkans. Nazi Germany's "vital space" in the east has been abandoned at the demand of Soviet Russia, and the Balkans are falling into Italy's hands. Germany already had a firm position in the Balkans, whereas her position in the east had first to be built up. It was the Balkan countries which were to be chained willy-nilly to Germany's war chariot, and, indeed, it was their assistance which was to make it possible for her to wage war at all. The old aspirant Italy was pushed into the background, but taking advantage of the position to-day she is coming to the forefront again. The "steel" Axis has turned out to be painted lath.

Of course, this does not mean that the Axis will never be resurrected. Mussolini has gladly taken all that Hitler offered, and he will continue to do so whenever opportunity affords. In the meantime he is prepared for any eventuality. The result of this Italian policy is that neither of the good Axis friends can quite rely on the other. Hitler reckoned on Mussolini's assistance and suffered disappointment. Mussolini would perhaps have suffered equal disappointment if he had, under other conditions, been compelled to appeal to Hitler for assistance against "Bolshevism."

Mussolini is conducting his affairs at the moment under the cloak of "Anti - Bolshevism." The "Defence of the Balkans against Stalin's conquests" is used as the moral justification for his actions, and with it he hopes to obtain the silent consent of the Western Powers, and even the sympathy of Nazi

Germany. Hitler himself used to play this gramophone record until he was compelled to put on another one. Although Mussolini was the first, and at one time the only, really militant anti-Bolshevist, this did not prevent his concluding a pact of non-aggression with Soviet Russia and maintaining favourable trading relations with her. The Italians knew considerably earlier than the rest of the world about the forthcoming pact between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, and the negotiations proceeded with their knowledge and approval. As we now know from the official French Yellow Book, in his speech of 7th December 1939 (which was never published in full) Count Ciano declared:

“So far as this question is concerned, it is necessary to point out that discussions between us and the German Government date from last April and May, and that we agreed that a policy of understanding with Russia should be followed, with a view to neutralizing her and thereby preventing her becoming a partner in the system of encirclement propagated by the great democracies.”

Nevertheless, the Italians were apparently a little surprised when Ribbentrop informed Ciano by telephone of the approaching signature of the pact, not having believed that the change was to be so sudden and so radical; but the pretence that Italy was quite innocent in the matter cannot be maintained.

Statistical investigations speak a plainer language than politicians, and they show that the Italians are the most heavily taxed people on earth, and that the shortage in all fields in Fascist Italy is hardly less acute than it is in Nazi Germany. In

addition they show that the needs of Abyssinia and Albania are so great that they can hardly be satisfied by the "Homeland." Hitler and Ribbentrop would have been better advised to talk to Professor Wagemann, of the Reich's Statistical Office, about Italy than with Count Ciano, or, at least, they would have done well to consult him both before and after every talk with Ciano.

General von Metzsch, who, despite all his friendship for Nazi Germany's potential ally, never liked the Brenner Pass, because he felt it was intended to give Italy a door into Austria and Germany, writes in his book *Wehrpolitik (Military Defence Policy)*:

"States which declare their neutrality at the beginning of a war although their unsatisfied aspirations are known, will merely wait to see which side seems to be winning before deciding to join it."

A Fascist or National Socialist State is not a reliable ally, not even for a State with a similar constitution.

The situation with regard to Spain is not very different. Authoritarian Spain was a trump card in the hands of Hitler and Mussolini so long as war had not actually broken out. France was threatened on three sides, and she had to take note of her danger, at least as long as she believed in Nazi Germany's strength and her preparedness to wage a war against the Western Powers. However, the best trump is not much good when all the other cards in the hand prove bad. Not only Italy but also Spain has recognized this. Like Italy, Spain used the favourable opportunity provided by the conclusion of Nazi Germany's pact with Soviet

Russia to divest herself of all obligations which might have caused her internal difficulties. Franco's victory in the civil war was almost entirely due to his Moroccans, his Italians, and his German airmen and artillerymen. He has nothing like a majority of the people of Spain behind him, and if he were involved in a foreign war the civil war at home would flare up again at the first opportunity.

Nazi Germany imagined that she would fight the war with allies, but now that the war has actually begun she finds herself alone, without a single ally. This is a further very good reason why she feels disinclined to stake her whole fate on the arbitrament of military force, and prefers to try her luck at political manœuvring just as long as she can.



## *Chapter Nine*

### RUSSIA AND THE WAR

"If her [Soviet Russia's] aim was to destroy the Anti-Comintern Pact then she was certainly successful. . . . On the other hand, the revolutionary enemies of National Socialism in Germany were disconcerted. Proudly fluttering Nazi flags in the heart of revolutionary Russia, and friendly exchanges and handshakes between Ribbentrop and Stalin, were something beyond their ken. And even Russian Communists must in their hearts have found the situation a strange one. However, whatever the reason for the astonishing change in Soviet Russia's policy, we may safely assume that she did not risk her material position and her moral credit in the world (affecting not only her own citizens, but many millions of sympathetic workers outside her own frontiers) without very good cause" (*Nazi Germany Can't Win*, pp. 194-195).

SOVIET RUSSIA's attitude to the outside world has always been directly influenced by the attitude of the outside world to Soviet Russia. When the outside world needed her she enjoyed a certain popularity, and old reproaches were shelved. Enmity

towards Soviet Russia was much more obstinate than, let us say, the hostility of the world towards Fascist Italy for her armed conquest of Abyssinia, a member of the League of Nations, and Albania. It is an interesting fact that at the beginning of the present war to deliver Poland from Nazi-German aggression the Western Powers recognized *de facto* Fascist Italy's equally brutal conquest of Albania by accrediting consuls to the Italian authorities in Albania. When Hitler seized Memel, a vital district for Lithuania because it contained the only decent harbour in the country, there was no outburst of indignation at all. Hitler even obtained the Sudeten district from the hands of the Western Powers, whilst Czechoslovakia was not consulted. The difference becomes still more blatant when we remember the civil war in Spain.

With the connivance and active assistance of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy General Franco launched a military rebellion against the properly constituted Government of Spain. The Western Powers refused the Government of Spain the right to purchase supplies, and closed their eyes when the military rebels obtained such supplies. But when Soviet Russia sent supplies to the legal Government there was immediately an outcry. The United States Government forbade its citizens to take any part in the "war" on the one hand, and refused the legal Government the status of a belligerent on the other. United States citizens who nevertheless volunteered to assist the legal Government were threatened with the loss of their citizenship. In the case of Finland the U.S. Government takes a different attitude: as Soviet

Russia has not declared war, U.S. citizens may take part in the struggle on Finland's side.

Whether Soviet Russia's attack on Finland was justified or not is another question; personally I do not think it was, but in politics and in war existing facts have to be recognized. The Soviet Government was well aware of the real opinion of the outside world concerning itself and its system, and it harboured no illusions on the point. That was why it insisted on tangible securities in the Baltic States and particularly in Finland.

The basic reason for this attitude of the outside world is, of course, the Communist system of Soviet Russia.

For an unprejudiced observer it must have been a cynical experience to see how united the rest of the world was the moment Soviet troops marched into eastern Poland, and still more so the moment they opened their campaign against Finland. There had been similar, at least outwardly similar, actions in previous years by other Powers, and though they had caused some excitement they had never produced such a united opposition.

Let us deal with this Soviet-German pact. The representatives of France and Great Britain negotiated for months without coming to any satisfactory conclusion. What actually happened we do not know even to-day—because despite repeated announcements that the facts were about to be published they have never appeared. It has been suggested that it was not possible to accept Soviet Russia's demands for her security (concessions which have since been granted to her by the Baltic States) at a time when the Western Powers were

admittedly defending another State from similar "concessions" to a third party.

The fact is, that in the event of war between Nazi Germany and Poland with Soviet Russia in the security block, the main weight of the campaign would have had to be borne by Soviet Russia and not by the Western Powers. Nazi Germany would have had to turn against the east (as she in fact did) because her way to the west was barred by the Maginot Line. In the meantime we have seen just how much resistance the Poles were in a position to offer, and Soviet Russia was never under any illusion on the point. After the recent experience of Holland and Belgium no one will doubt that Nazi Germany would not have hesitated to threaten the neutrality of the Baltic States.

If their neutrality had been violated, Soviet Russia would have found herself in an unenviable position. She would have had to bear the brunt of the war, the Baltic would have been closed to her, and the German enemy would soon have been in Esthonia directly before the gates of Leningrad. In this event the 180 million people of Soviet Russia would have been practically cut off from Europe. The railway over Murmansk would hardly have been in a position to cope with the necessary traffic, and—a point which must be specially mentioned in this connection—the Finns have never appeared particularly friendly to Soviet Russia.

It must not be forgotten that in the summer of 1939 the Chief of the German General Staff paid visits not only to the three Baltic States, but also to Finland, and that the closest relations existed between

anti-Soviet Germany and anti-Soviet Finland. Finland and Poland have always prided themselves on being the defenders of western European culture against "Bolshevist barbarism," and an unprejudiced observer will find it impossible to reproach the Russians for being extremely careful.

An article in the German military periodical *Wehrfront*, of 20th April 1939, indicates the value the Germans attach to the small islands in the Gulf of Finland. The article is entitled "The Red Frontier in the Gulf of Finland," and the author is a Swedish engineer, Vitalis Pantenburg, whose work is often published in Nazi Germany. He writes:

"Two hours later I reached my journey's end, Seiskari, the easternmost Finnish island in the Gulf of Finland. Lying right in the heart of the last corner of the gulf still left to Soviet Russia this island blocks the entrance to Kronstadt and Leningrad. The long granite mole is not yet completed, and our landing therefore took place with some difficulty through a boiling sea."

The military significance of this otherwise quite worthless little island is clearly indicated by Pantenburg. At that time Hitler was still playing the old anti-Bolshevist record. The passage also indicates that the Finnish Government was going to some expense to make the island suitable for the only function it could ever fulfil. This was a clear threat to the Russians, who up to then at least had shown not the slightest intention of attacking Finland.

Further, the harbour of Petsamo, about which we hear so much to-day, and which is supposed

to be of little value, was in reality very obviously destined to play an important role in any future conflict with Soviet Russia. In 1937 a German naval commission appeared in Petsamo and conducted very detailed investigations. The reason for this was never published, but there was no doubt in the minds of the people in the know, including the Russians. German naval experts did not conduct scientific inquiries on Finnish territory just for the fun of the thing, and they did not do so without the permission of the Finnish Government.

The Japanese proved to be a little more cautious. The commission they sent to Petsamo consisted of "hydrotechnical experts." If these Japanese had been the only "scientists" on the spot it wouldn't have been so bad, but coming on top of the German naval commission it left no doubt that the intense interest of two members of the anti-Russian alliance indicated that something was being prepared which boded no good to Soviet Russia.

Petsamo, the world has since learned, is the best harbour in the north of Europe and it is particularly suitable as a submarine base. It cannot be blockaded by mines, and knowledgeable experts declare that it could be made into "the Gibraltar of the North." With Petsamo as a base Soviet Russia's last outlet to the sea could be closed up.

For years Soviet Russia had offered the Western Powers her assistance against Nazi Germany, but at Munich she was kept out in the cold while her ally Czechoslovakia was sliced up and then handed helpless to the Nazis. A few months later the same Powers which had manœuvred Soviet

Russia out of the Munich settlement demanded Soviet Russia's assistance for Poland, one of her bitterest enemies, against Nazi Germany, to whom Soviet Russia's ally Czechoslovakia had previously been sacrificed.

Soviet Russia found herself in a very unfavourable strategic situation with the enemy practically at her gates, and all she had on her side was, as is freely enough admitted to-day, a thoroughly unreliable ally in Poland. This ally was not even willing to accept active assistance from Soviet Russia, and declared that she would be able to defend herself merely with supplies of arms. If Poland were overrun, and Soviet Russia were in alliance with her, then Soviet Russia would have to foot the bill. As Poland was not given adequate financial assistance by the Western Powers she was not even able to avail herself of the arms supply. Up to the present no one has suggested that States supply each other with arms for love and without payment.

The situation was thus very different from what public opinion has been led to believe, and under the circumstances it is difficult to criticize the demands of Soviet Russia for bases in the Baltic States. It must also not be forgotten that for a very long time after the World War the admitted political role of these Baltic States was to form a barrier between Soviet Russia and the sea. A few submarines operating from the Finnish islands would have been sufficient to cut off a tremendous country from its most important outlet to the sea; and its second most important town, Leningrad, was actually within range of artillery from foreign soil.

The Baltic States are not really democratic Powers at all, but countries dictatorially ruled. Even Finland is democratic only in name. Behind the Government, which has at times been openly Fascist, stands General Mannerheim, who is one of the bitterest enemies of Soviet Russia and has never made any secret of it. Finland was less democratic than democratic Germany, behind which were the nationalist semi-military organizations and the Reichswehr. *The Daily Mail* declared on 17th October 1939 that General Mannerheim, as President of the Supreme Defence Council of Finland, was in reality "the uncrowned king" of the country, and that real power in the State was in the hands of the army, which supported the Conservative and Fascist organizations, although they were not represented in the Government.

This was the army which was within artillery range of Leningrad. Naturally, it could never have attacked Soviet Russia on its own, but in alliance with a coalition against "Bolshevism" it could have played a very important part. In the past Finland has played such a part, and it was from Finnish territory that more than one attack against Leningrad was launched during the years of the civil war, despite the fact that Soviet Russia (unlike the democratic regime of Kerensky) was the first big Power to recognize the independence of Finland. Soviet Russia even went so far as to hand over Petsamo and district to Finland, although it had been Russian territory for a very long time. These are one or two facts which must not be forgotten when the actions of Soviet Russia are being discussed.



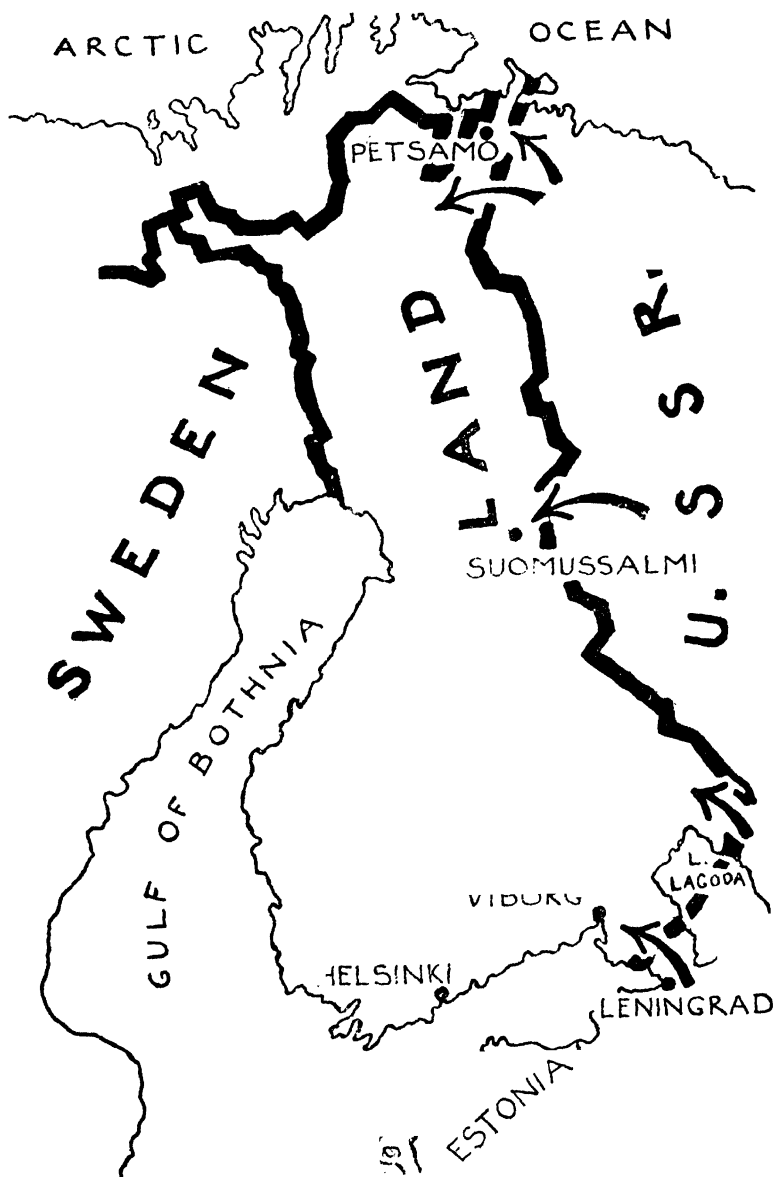
There is a further point which should be mentioned. After a period of moderate friendship towards Soviet Russia there came the German-Soviet pact, and this released a wave of accusations which were certainly not justified at the time. Soviet Russia had been very coldly treated, and only a year before she had been manœuvred out of her alliances, and practically squeezed out of western Europe. Hitler had enjoyed the great triumph of bringing the other big European Powers into line with him against Soviet Russia. The Four Power Conference was a clear challenge and threat to Soviet Russia irrespective of the diplomatic denials which accompanied it. The Czechoslovakian Minister for Propaganda declared openly, in a speech which was broadcast to the world, that the Czechoslovakian Government had been told bluntly by Great Britain and France that it would be regarded as an enemy if it dared to defend its country in alliance with Soviet Russia. And now Soviet Russia was suddenly asked to be a partner with the automatic obligation of carrying great burdens under the most unfavourable conditions.

In these circumstances the Soviet Government exercised the greatest possible caution and restraint, and also demanded the strongest pledges for her own security. She certainly demanded a great deal, but in view of the dangers to which she was exposed this was understandable. Actually (with the exception of Finland) Soviet Russia received all and more than all she demanded. Up to the present there have been no complaints whatever that she has attempted to exercise any influence on the internal policy of the countries concerned, and

Soviet troops stationed in these countries are acting under the strictest orders to keep themselves aloof from the civil population. There has also not been the slightest vestige of "Bolshevist propaganda."

And now to Finland. According to a memorandum published by the Finnish Foreign Office, the Soviet Government requested that the Finnish-Soviet frontier should be withdrawn to a certain distance from Leningrad, that certain small islands in the Gulf of Finland, the harbour of Hangö at the entrance to the gulf, and the harbour of Petsamo in the north, should be ceded to Soviet Russia. It must be pointed out that this claim for Petsamo did not include the Petsamo district, with its valuable nickel mines, but merely the harbour. It has often been said that the Soviet claim did include the nickel mines, but in an official denial issued by the Tass Agency it was pointed out that Soviet Russia had never demanded the return of this district. Even the official Finnish memorandum speaks only of anchorage rights in the Bay of Lapponye.

A glance at the map is necessary in order to understand the significance of Soviet Russia's demands. It will be seen that Leningrad lies deep in the interior of the Gulf of Finland. At the mouth of the gulf are a number of sparsely populated or even uninhabited islands, which could however be used to close the gulf completely if they were fortified, or even used as submarine bases. For Finland herself the islands are utterly useless, and the only value they could possibly have would be to shut Soviet Russia out of the Baltic. The same could be done from Hangö. Finally across the



ARROWS SHOW DIRECTION OF RUSSIAN ATTACKS

Carelian Isthmus the Finnish-Soviet frontier is within artillery range of Leningrad.

*How Important is Soviet Russia's Change of Front?*

It is difficult to appreciate all the implications of the change in Soviet Russia's foreign policy by the pact of non-aggression signed with Nazi Germany in August 1939 when all the material upon which to base a judgment is taken from the usual newspaper reports. The September number of the *Communist International*, the official organ of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, publishes an article entitled "The Nature of German Fascism." At the conclusion of a detailed examination, extending over nine closely printed pages, this official publication declares:

"He who attempts to surround the crimes of the Fascist waylayers with a halo, whether he likes it or not, becomes their accomplice, the assistant of the executioners of the freedom of nations. The day on which the unnatural social mass basis of Fascism revolts against the humiliating, debasing, tormenting, torturing top; the day on which the masses of the people settle accounts with the Fascist war-mongers and encirclers; the day on which the peoples of Austria and Czechoslovakia, who have been forced under the yoke of national slavery by Pan-German imperialism, rise up, on that day they will also settle accounts with the 'theoretical' accomplices of the Fascist myrmidons, and show them where they belong: in the ash-can of history!"

While ignoring its comic turgidity it is important to observe that the passage is, to say the least of

it, unfriendly towards the new "ally." One might suppose that it had been written before the conclusion of the pact, and that is quite possible, but the same number also contains the speech Molotov delivered on 31st August on the pact of non-aggression, so that at least it was quite deliberately printed after the event. The number also contains an article by Molotov on the signing of the pact, and it is important that it should be read objectively, and not interpreted according to the principle of wish-fulfilment. "It is our duty," writes Molotov, "to think of the interests of the Soviet people, the interests of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics." He felt convinced also, he declared, that these interests did not run counter to the true interests of the people of other countries.

Why did the negotiations with Great Britain and France lead to failure? Molotov has a lot to say on the point, and in one passage he sums up the position as follows:

"On the one hand Great Britain and France demanded that the U.S.S.R. should give unlimited assistance to Poland in case of aggression. The U.S.S.R., as you know, was willing to meet this demand, provided that the U.S.S.R. itself received like assistance from Great Britain and France. On the other hand, Great Britain and France brought Poland on the scene, who resolutely declined military assistance from the U.S.S.R. Just try under such circumstances to reach an agreement regarding mutual assistance when assistance on the part of the U.S.S.R. is declared beforehand to be unnecessary and intrusive." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Taken from the English edition.—W.N.

Further, although Great Britain and France had offered military assistance against aggression in return for like assistance on the part of the U.S.S.R., their offer had been surrounded by so many reservations with regard to indirect aggression that it amounted to little or nothing, and provided them with legal excuses for anything. The U.S.S.R. had been manœuvred into an isolated position towards the aggressor. The Franco-British Military Mission had arrived in Moscow without any powers, and only on the eve of the final breakdown of negotiations had its leaders presented some vague sort of authority.

For the moment we are unfortunately not in possession of any corresponding statement from the Franco-British side, so that Molotov's version of the matter must be accepted in default of any denial. We also do not know what form Franco-British military assistance for Soviet Russia was to have taken. But after the result of the Polish campaign it is possible to understand some of the misgivings of the Soviet Government. Without a pact with Nazi Germany they would have had the German Army on the Soviet frontiers as an enemy, and nowhere would there have been a friend in sight to whom they could have looked for active assistance. Germany would once again have been facing eastward, protected in the west by the Siegfried Line. Whether Nazi Germany would have been victorious in a war of aggression against the Soviet Union is another matter, but in view of her anxious search for an enemy which she could attack, Soviet Russia's eastern frontiers would have been a favourable venue for her operations. She could

once again have presented herself to the world as its champion against "Bolshevism," and on this basis new peace proposals could have been made to the Western Powers with greater chances of acceptance. Some sort of Polish State could have been re-established, whilst Nazi Germany retained sufficient of the booty to keep her economic system going for a little while longer.

This was the situation in which Soviet Russia opened up negotiations with Nazi Germany, and, according to Molotov:

"It can now be seen that the whole of Germany correctly understood these statements of Stalin and drew practical conclusions from them."

At this point the report (of proceedings before the Supreme Soviet Council) mentions "laughter."

To put it plainly, the Russians were well aware that the Germans drew their conclusions under duress, and that for both sides the new "friendship" was a matter of practical advantage and not real friendship at all.

There is no doubt that it was anxiety at the possibility of a German attack which caused Soviet Russia to conclude the pact of non-aggression, coupled, of course, with the fear that in the event of a pact with the Western Powers she would be left to face Nazi Germany without tangible assistance.

The next question might be why Soviet Russia did not line up with the enemies of Nazi Germany even without a pact, and do her best to bring the war to as speedy an end as possible by cutting off Nazi Germany's supplies?

The answer is that such an action would have done nothing to stave off the acute threat to the

safety of Soviet Russia. After the defeat of Poland, Soviet Russia would have had a very disagreeable joint frontier with Nazi Germany. After having occupied Polish Ukraina, with its wheat, rye, and oil belts, Nazi Germany would have been considerably stronger than she is ever likely to become even with the supplies Soviet Russia can send her. In addition, we must make allowances for the deep distrust harboured by Soviet Russia at the attitude of the Western Powers, a distrust we can sense very clearly in Molotov's words.

It is said that Soviet Russia has now banded herself with Nazi Germany to pursue a joint campaign of imperialist expansion. But if she really harboured such a programme of imperialist expansion, Soviet Russia would hardly have sought out a partner whose fatal weaknesses were well known to her. The passage we have quoted from the *Communist International* conveys enough concerning the real opinion of Soviet Russia about Nazi Germany. There is plenty of other material of the same sort which might be quoted—for instance, the statement that Fascist German Imperialism cannot “stew in its own juice,” but, from Hitler's own words, must expand or perish. Soviet Russia has now erected barriers to Nazi Germany's expansionist tendencies in the east at least, and stopped Hitler's mouth at the same time with the pact. As far as Soviet Russia was concerned the signing of the pact was a diplomatic master-stroke. At the same time we can observe that Stalin by no means makes any secret of his real opinions, and permits the *Communist International* and many other publications to attack Hitler just as they did before.



Unless the Western Powers are anxious to make a serious blunder in their estimation of the real significance of the pact, they must not overlook these things.

It is possible that a situation will arise in which Soviet Russia will show more interest in the Balkans than she has shown in the past, though she is unlikely to be in a hurry to engage herself unnecessarily. At the moment the rivalry between the two Axis partners, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, prevents either from obtaining any dominating position there. Bessarabia, for instance, represents a ticklish problem. In the long run Roumania is not likely to draw much advantage from retaining this poverty-stricken district, whose inhabitants could not possibly be worse off under Soviet rule than they are already under Roumanian rule.

On the map Roumania looks like a homogeneous State within satisfactory frontiers, but once the map is coloured according to nationalities the position looks very different. Not that people of different nationalities cannot live together in peace within the same State, but there are States in which they do not, and Roumania is one of them. They are being held under with a rod of iron in Carol's Roumania. When the declarations of loyalty sent to Bucharest are published all seems to be well, but once the pressure is relaxed, or the minorities vigorously supported from outside, the whole edifice will fall into its component parts, and then Soviet Russia may intervene to secure her minorities just as she did in Poland. However, this intervention need by no means favour Nazi

Germany or provoke a war with Fascist Italy, which might well bring the rest of Europe into arms against Soviet Russia.

*The Mistakes in Soviet Russia's Calculations*

It is possible to have many good reasons for executing one's plans, and then to make cardinal errors in the process, thereby putting oneself in the wrong. First of all, the time chosen may be wrong. In this particular instance it was certainly wrong, for a number of reasons. Once Great Britain and France had, after much hesitation, decided to oppose Nazi Germany's aggression—*i.e.* when they finally did what Soviet Russia had been demanding all along that they should do—it was hardly possible to ask them to remain passive towards an act of aggression which formally, at least, was very similar. The reaction of the world to Soviet Russia's attack might have been foreseen. With one blow she lost all the sympathy she had gained in the world outside the ranks of Communist workers, and it was not inconsiderable. Soviet Russia had declared herself a staunch opponent of Nazi Germany, and she had battled vigorously for the adoption of the principle of collective security which the other big Powers had dropped. Her representatives had preached the indivisibility of peace and formally damned all forms of aggression, so that when she herself clearly entered into the ranks of the aggressors she gave her old ideological enemies a fine arsenal of weapons with which to attack her.

No country had ever been expelled from the

League of Nations before, but Soviet Russia was expelled in the twinkling of an eye. Her action was, in fact, an indisputable case of aggression, for Finland had obviously made not the slightest move to attack Soviet Russia, or if she had it was not visible. The pretext that shots had been fired by Finnish artillery, killing soldiers on Soviet territory, was not good enough. If such shots were actually fired then it was undoubtedly an error, because although General Mannerheim is a frank and bitter enemy of Soviet Russia, he is also a capable soldier, and he is not likely to have attacked a people of 180 millions with his little army.

However, from Soviet Russia's standpoint the situation is quite clear. A victory in Finland taken together with Soviet command of bases in the Baltic could bar the way to Nazi aggression. If big fleets are unwilling to come out to the open sea to attack for fear of submarines, it is not likely that they would venture into the Baltic. Russia's war against Finland is therefore a clear case of preventive war, though Russia herself has always steadfastly opposed such wars. The accusation which was always made against Bismarck now rests on the shoulders of Soviet Russia's leaders.

The second error was the time of the attack, judged from the military viewpoint. Soviet Russia's leaders obviously miscalculated. They assumed that they would be able to settle the Finns in a very short space of time in much the same way as the Germans finished off the Poles. They therefore did not reckon with a winter campaign in which the severe cold would give the Finnish defenders a great advantage. In this way little

Finland has been presented with victories which, although they were probably not so great and lasting as has been suggested, were nevertheless sufficient to damage the prestige of the Red Army very badly. Finland enjoys the sympathy of the world, and she has earned it by her heroic defence. It doesn't matter much with what intentions the Finnish Government may be credited, the fact remains that the Finnish people defended their national integrity, and did it with courage, self-sacrifice, and some degree of success.

The Soviet leaders also obviously miscalculated the attitude of the Finnish people to their Government. They thought they could rely on a Communist proletariat within Finland to assist them, but they were wrong. There is no very big Communist proletariat in Finland although it is true that Communism in Finland is repressed with a severity usual only in openly Fascist countries. But Finland is not an industrial country with a large proletariat. The country is one of the most petty bourgeois in Europe. The experiment with the "People's Government" of Otto Kuusinen was therefore doomed to failure from the start.

Then there were the methods used by Soviet Russia. For years her Government had been condemning aggressors who attacked their neighbours with military force, and suddenly she adopted their technique. She had been loud in her condemnation of the Fascist air raids in Spain, and now she bombed Finnish towns.

The preliminary attacks on the Mannerheim Line were carried out in defiance of modern experience, with the result that the Red Army met with severe

reverses and the military prestige of the Red Army generals suffered badly. They under-estimated their enemies and attacked with inadequate forces, a cardinal military error. Another great mistake was not to wage the campaign with troops hardened to severe climatic conditions and properly equipped to stand them. This was an extraordinary blunder, because of all countries in the world Soviet Russia has perhaps the greatest number of such troops, including strong forces of well-trained ski-troops.

Further, the morale of the Soviet troops and their enthusiasm for the war do not seem to have been very high. Small wonder, because the people of the Soviet Union had been assured again and again that they would never be called upon to wage an aggressive war, and suddenly they found themselves being compelled to do so. The Soviet Government has made the Russian soldier a political soldier, and radical changes are not easy for him unless he can see their reason. It was quite certain that little Finland could not have attacked mighty Russia, and it was also clear that all the big Powers which might under other circumstances have misused Finland against Russia had their hands full elsewhere.

The situation would have been very different if there had been any real and obvious threat to the security of Soviet Russia. Such a threat need not have culminated in a definite attack; the political Russian soldier would have recognized the situation. For this reason it would be a gross error to draw a general conclusion from the apparent failure of the Russians in Finland. In a war in which Soviet

Russia is obviously attacked the very same men will put up an incomparably better show.

The effect of the pact with Nazi Germany lay in the same direction. Speaking at celebrations on the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, Molotov declared that no one would be able to drag Soviet Russia into the war. That was directed against both the Western Powers and Nazi Germany, and the "Nazi aggressors" were attacked together with the others. The *Communist International* had attacked Hitler together with all the other capitalist States. And now Molotov announced, in a speech delivered to the Supreme Soviet Council towards the end of October, that Nazi Germany, of all countries, was in favour of peace, whilst the other Powers wanted war and conquests: "During the past few months the definition of aggression has changed. Germany is now striving for peace, but Britain, which up to yesterday was against aggression, is now for war." The Russian worker, fed for years on anti-Nazi propaganda, must have found that difficult to swallow, just as the German Communist worker certainly did, for he had been fighting against Hitler for seven years under extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

The French Communists were amongst the most violent advocates of strong action against Nazi aggression, and if they had had their way there would have been no Munich at all. The same attitude was adopted by large sections of the population in France and elsewhere, which were in sharp opposition to their Governments. They demanded that Nazi aggression should be stopped because each new act of surrender was inevitably

followed by a new act of aggression. Now they were asked to accept Nazi Germany's attack on Poland, although a new attack in some other direction would inevitably have followed it. If the war of England and France against Nazi Germany was a preventive war, and was still not justifiable because Germany was formally pleading for peace after her conquest of Poland—then the aggression against Finland must be judged in the same way, as it was launched only to prevent a possible attack against Russia in the future.

For a number of years Communist theory had distinguished between aggressive imperialist countries and those which merely defended their possessions. These latter countries were possible allies, and the People's Front policy in France had the same aims in the domestic political field. This theory was now suddenly dropped, and the people were informed that the imperialists were *agents-provocateurs* who aimed at dragging Soviet Russia into the war. Prior to this, Soviet Russia's leaders had included the possibility of war with Nazi Germany in their calculations, particularly in the case of Czechoslovakia, whose conquest they now recognized. It was quite clear that if the new theories were right, the old ones must have been wrong. If Germany were no longer Nazi Germany, and was now fighting for her life against outside aggression, then the *Communist International* must have made grievous errors.

What was right and what was wrong? If it was now right to ensure peace "under all circumstances," then surely the Munich Agreement made by Chamberlain must have been right, although

Soviet Russia's leaders damned it vigorously at the time. Up to the end of the summer the Soviet Government had negotiated with the Western Powers for the conclusion of an alliance, and when success seemed unlikely the tiller was suddenly put hard over. The negotiations dealt with the coming attack on Poland, and an alliance between the Western Powers and Soviet Russia was aimed at, in order to prevent that and all further aggression. The negotiations broke down, the Russo-German Pact was signed, the attack on Poland came as expected, and the way was open for the next step in Nazi aggression.

Why was it suddenly wrong for the rest of Europe to offer resistance to Nazi aggression? Supposing resistance had been offered in 1938, but that Nazi Germany had succeeded in crushing Czechoslovakia before Soviet troops or other assistance could arrive, would Soviet Russia have stopped the war just because Nazi Germany, having swallowed the booty, then wanted peace? It would seem that there could be only one answer to this question, but there is another one, namely, that when a non-imperialist State like the Soviet Union takes part in a war, the war thereby alters its character. However, now that the Soviet Government announces insistently that its alliance with Nazi Germany, who has altered neither her intentions nor her methods, is "as pure as a golden chain," and that it has been "sealed with blood," even this argument loses some of its efficacy.

Nazi Germany has not changed her character in the least. She remains a danger to the whole world, and one which must be liquidated before any new



world order is at all possible. It would be difficult to convince those Communists and others who are still occupants of Nazi Germany's prisons and concentration camps of anything to the contrary. When her policy was anti-Nazi, Soviet Russia secured the surrender of Dimitrov, whose masterly defence at the Reichstag fire trial at Leipzig won him the sympathy of the world. To-day Thaelmann, the leader of the German Communist Party, is still in gaol in Nazi Germany and no charges have been formulated against him. That might be taken as a sign that the friendship between the two pact partners is superficial and opportunist only, but it might also be a sign that the Soviet Government no longer attaches much importance to the fate of Germany's anti-Nazi elements. The fact that Thaelmann and all the other Communist and non-Communist opponents of the Nazi regime are in prison, is a symbol of the enslavement of the German workers.

It was a great mistake on the part of the Western Powers not to secure Soviet Russia's support for the peace front. It is useless to plead that she put forward demands which were unacceptable; the fact is that almost all of these demands have since been fulfilled because they were obviously necessary, with or without the approval of the Western Powers. The art of politics is to attain the possible. In this case the possible was not attained and at the same time more than the necessary price was paid. Anyhow the Western Powers could hardly plead consistency, because they had acknowledged Fascist Italy's conquests. But they would not admit the justification for the very necessary guarantees

demanding by Soviet Russia when faced with the likelihood of a fierce struggle against the military might of Nazi Germany.

By her opportunist attitude Soviet Russia has deprived herself in advance of the possibility of appearing on the scene after the conflict as a powerful arbitrator, who, on the basis of an unswerving peace policy before the war, would have been morally entitled in the eyes of the world to speak weighty words concerning the establishment of a new world order. Unfortunately, instead, she has united the world and all anti-Bolshevist forces against her. In addition she has caused incredible confusion in the ranks of the Communist and non-Communist workers throughout the world, who were amongst her firmest supporters.

There is one very important witness whose evidence might be taken on the point. He declares:

“Only parties with equal rights can come to a real agreement. If an agreement is to be a real one and not merely a conquest cloaked by phrases then real equality of rights as between the parties to the agreement is necessary. This means that not only Russia but also Finland must have the right to reject the proposed terms. . . . Force must not be used to compel other nations to join in an alliance with the Russians. Only a really voluntary, a really free agreement must be arrived at. . . .

“The Finns say they have the right to decide on their own fate according to their own judgment, and the Russians who deny them this right are chauvinists. . . . Are we to continue these tactics of Tsarism? That would be a denial of the tactics of internationalism, the worst sort of chauvinism.”

This witness is none other than Lenin himself, and the above quotations are from a speech he delivered on 12th May 1917. It might be objected that the case at present is not quite the same, but in part at least it undeniably is. Together with demands for concessions of a legal and territorial nature, Finland was offered an alliance like that offered to the other Baltic States. This point is an integral part of the situation which led up to the war. This can be seen from the fact that the Soviet Government alleged that it could negotiate only with the so-called Kuusinen Government, which obviously had no support amongst the people of Finland. A war against a very considerably superior enemy is perhaps possible for a well-organized army like the German, but hardly for the little Finnish Army, which was required to fight against an overwhelming superiority whilst at the same time being largely dependent on voluntary support itself. Finland, particularly in war-time, cannot be held in check with a "Gestapo," and if Kuusinen had really enjoyed any support worth mentioning it would have been able to make itself felt.

By her attack on Finland Soviet Russia lost innumerable sympathizers gained amongst the bourgeoisie. Mr Winston Churchill declared before the war that there was no means of maintaining an Eastern Front against Nazi aggression without the active aid of Russia,<sup>1</sup> and in his speech in November 1939 as First Lord of the Admiralty he spoke sympathetically of her and declared that her national interests were undoubtedly the clue to her attitude towards Poland.

<sup>1</sup> In *The Daily Telegraph*, 4th May 1939.

Soviet Russia's action has given new strength to all those dark forces which are working for the disappearance of Hitler only in order that subsequently Germany and the Western Powers shall combine to attack Soviet Russia.

*Soviet Economic Assistance Unlikely*

“In addition there are transport difficulties which, after the destruction of the Polish roads, will take a long time to overcome” (*Nazi Germany Can't Win*, p. 258).

Some of my critics declared that *Nazi Germany Can't Win* was already out-of-date because it was written before the conclusion of the Russo-German Pact and therefore ignored the economic assistance which Hitler would now receive from Soviet Russia. They overlooked the fact that I did not base my arguments on a triple alliance between Great Britain, France, and Russia, but merely presented that as a desirable consummation. I assumed that such an alliance might prevent the war altogether, and certainly win it if it had to be fought after all.

An interesting feature of Soviet Russia's economic system has often been overlooked, *i.e.* that she cannot export goods on any large scale and will not be in a position to do so for a long time. This, incidentally, must not be counted amongst her weaknesses. Countries with a capitalist economic system are compelled to export and import goods, but the more really Communist Soviet Russia becomes economically the less she need either export or import. She does not want to export goods; she requires them herself. She is, on the other hand, quite willing to export her gold, and most of her

debts to Germany have been paid in this way. Before the war and before the institution of the blockade gold was a very important thing for Nazi Germany; to-day it is of lesser importance. In the meantime we have seen how much effective assistance is actually being given by Russia to Germany. Germany boasts that she has rebuilt the Polish railway system in a few weeks, but we know that she cannot keep even her own running satisfactorily. There is a shortage of tank-wagons for the transport of Roumanian oil, and there is a shortage of trucks for the fodder which was to have come from Soviet Russia in such enormous quantities. Nazi Germany has now asked Belgium and Sweden to lend her goods wagons; she can expect none from Russia, who has none to spare, and whose trucks are in any case built for a different gauge.

The barrier erected by the U.S.S.R. between Nazi Germany and the Roumanian frontier has proved very effective in diminishing pressure on Roumania, which would otherwise be completely at Germany's mercy.<sup>1</sup> The corn-bin of the Ukraine is closed to her, but although Soviet Russia has shown willingness to conclude agreements for deliveries she has shown less willingness to implement such agreements in a way such as might be expected of a loyal ally. Soviet Russia is utilizing the position in which Germany finds herself, just as Germany is utilizing the weakness of the Balkan States and other small neutral countries. She supplies what she can when the purchaser pays

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless it is possible that Roumania will turn to Russia one day if the position of the Allies in the Balkans is weakened.

cash, but the great hopes of the Nazis and the anxious fears of certain circles outside Nazi Germany will not be fulfilled because they were both based on a false estimation of the character of the U.S.S.R., which represents a huge area of land requiring all its own resources for its work of construction.

There is no doubt that since the conclusion of the pact the Nazis have had their eyes opened on this point. Despite the demonstrative friendship shown on Stalin's birthday, with its exchange of telegrams, both sides are now busily engaged in fortifying their respective frontiers, and both sides have strong forces opposite each other. Then the war in Finland will have deprived Nazi Germany of important cellulose and copper deliveries, and foodstuffs. It is quite possible that the Nazis were aware in advance that adequate supplies from Soviet Russia would be unobtainable, when they tried to bluff the Western Powers and Poland into over-estimating Germany's strength and surrendering to her threats.

The Pact of Non-Aggression signed with Soviet Russia was a typical diplomatic coup with which a country driven into a corner tries to turn the tables on its opponents by a great bluff. But when bluff is systematically used it fails in its effect in the end. It should have been clear to Hitler that this time his enemies were unwilling to let themselves be bluffed again, and certainly not with the Russo-German pact. There was never much love lost between Great Britain and France on the one hand and Soviet Russia on the other, though Great Britain and France wooed her when they thought they needed her. When woos are tilted

and watch the wooed turn to their rivals, love is likely to turn to hate very rapidly.

The pact with Soviet Russia has not given Nazi Germany a free hand as she hoped, and it has not made any very important breaches in the British blockade. All it has done really is to turn potential enmity into shaky friendship, but one which materially is of little value. With the signing of the pact the situation became really serious for Hitler. The pact also gave Nazi Germany's former friends, countries which she thought she had bound to her side with armament assistance and agreements, the opportunity to withdraw from the Anti-Comintern Pact. It is quite possible that Nazi Germany will discover that she has paid far too high a price for her political victory.

### *The Russians in Finland*

Soviet Russia has a population of approximately 180 millions. The population of Finland is 3.5 millions. That this small people succeeded in holding out so long against 180 millions was an astonishing performance, despite the fact that conditions were admittedly bad for the Soviet attackers. For the transport of their troops the Russians had only one single-track line which is hardly capable of taking the weight of traffic of a normal railway in Europe. This line is greatly hampered by wintry weather; it leads over the Arctic Circle and along the coast of a sea which is frozen for a long period in winter. Even with 180 million people as a reserve it is possible to send only a certain number to the front under such

circumstances. One might almost say that the transport conditions for the Russians were even more unfavourable than they were in the Russo-Japanese War. This is the chief reason why the Russians hammered away so persistently at the Mannerheim Line. The transport conditions in this area of hostilities were better and it was possible to bring up larger numbers of men and larger quantities of material, though on the actual front there was very little room to deploy really big forces, and frontal attacks could never be carried out by more than a few divisions at a time.

The conditions under which the Finns had to fight in this area were more favourable, because they were behind powerful fortifications and therefore in a position to make up, in part at least, for their lack of men and material. Much has been written about the alleged lack of collaboration between the 163rd and the 44th Soviet Divisions, which the Finns claim to have destroyed near Suomussalmi in January. We do not know how far the "destruction" actually went, but it would seem that the Finns did not really advance very far into Soviet territory, as was reported. In any case it could hardly have been their intention, because they would have found themselves operating too far away from their own bases. Soviet Russia's communications with the north seem to have been maintained and the line kept open, though it is possible that occasional "suicide patrols" did succeed in reaching the line and doing a certain amount of temporary damage. However, there was never any real threat to the line.

The next and more serious step of the Russians



was their attack around Lake Ladoga. This drive seems to have been repulsed at the beginning of February. With the coming of the severe weather the Russians carried out a partial withdrawal in this area, and towards the end of January successful Finnish attacks were reported.

At the same time the Russians continued hammering away at the Mannerheim Line, particularly against the extreme right wing of the Finnish defences, and, as we know, they finally succeeded in breaking it. The only really big success which attended the Russian operations was the drive towards Viborg, the second-biggest town in the country, which Soviet troops invested just before the armistice.

It is difficult to say what forces were in action on either side, and all estimates are hypothetical. It is, of course, quite certain that the Russian forces were stronger than the Finnish, and the attack on the Mannerheim Line will give Hitler something to think about. The Russians succeeded in forcing the Mannerheim Line thanks only to a great preponderance of men and material, a circumstance which will never materialize in Hitler's favour on the Western Front, or, at least, never to the same extent.

Owing to transport and terrain difficulties it was no easy matter even for the Russians to concentrate sufficient men and material before the Mannerheim Line. It is also interesting that the important offensives against the "waist" of Finland were carried out by isolated divisions. We have read all sorts of estimates of the expenditure of artillery ammunition, but on closer examination it is clear

that for the Russians the whole affair was only a "minor war." On 5th February it was reported that in the attack on the Summa sector of the Mannerheim Line the Soviet artillery had fired 30,000 shells within ten hours, or 50 rounds a minute. Nothing was said about the size of the sector or the calibre of the shells, but a comment was made that in view of such an enormous expenditure of ammunition the Russians would soon be suffering from a shortage.

Another report informed us that at the eastern end of the Mannerheim Line no less than 120,000 shells had been fired within ten hours on a particular sector. To draw conclusions from this about a probable shortage of munitions merely indicates that the reporter, in this case a Swede, had no idea of the enormous amounts of ammunition regularly expended in any attack on heavily fortified positions. The 30,000 rounds in ten hours could have been fired by a single regiment of artillery. The Russians boast that the firing-power of their artillery is greater than that of other armies. Speaking at the Eighteenth Congress of the Communist Party, in March 1939, Marshal Voroshilov declared:

"I shall take German and French Army Corps for purposes of comparison as their structure is most analogous to that of our own Army Corps.

"The aggregate artillery salvo of a French Army Corps (consisting of three divisions) is 6373 kilogrammes, that of a German Army Corps of the same composition 6078 kilogrammes. The aggregate artillery salvo of a Red Army Corps is 7136 kilogrammes."

He then went on to say that if all forms of

munitions expended by an Army Corps in one minute, including cartridges, bombs, grenades, etc., were totalled, the Soviet total would be 78,932 kilogrammes and the French and German totals 60,981 and 59,509 kilogrammes respectively.

When we remember that during the five-hour period of artillery preparation which preceded the great German offensive in March 1918 no less than 9,000,000 shells were fired, we are able to reduce the Russo-Finnish War to its proper proportions. Now as the Russians are undoubtedly prepared for a big war, involving a huge expenditure of artillery ammunition, it is extremely unlikely that the so-called "waste of artillery ammunition" on the Carelian Isthmus ever threatened to make any very great inroads on their supplies.

It is also reported that two divisions were in action in one of the decisive drives on the Summa sector. This indicates too that from the Soviet standpoint the Finnish affair was not a big war at all. In the middle of February four divisions were reported to be in action, and their casualty list was given as 40,000 dead and wounded. Later in the month the Finns reported a big victory from central Finland, where the 54th and 33rd Soviet Divisions were said to have been destroyed, losing 6000 dead and 20,000 wounded. It may be that the Finns succeeded in enveloping the Soviet troops and perhaps partly destroying their baggage and artillery. But it is interesting to note that this figure exceeds the total number of men who could possibly have been engaged in the push.

The truth is that it was the winter, primarily, and the transport congestion caused in Soviet Russia by

winter conditions, which prevented military operations on a really big scale. However, this does not explain why the Russians originally attacked with inadequate forces. They would have been in a better position to wait for improved weather conditions than the Finns, even if the Finns were hopeful of reinforcements; and they made the mistake of attacking with inadequate forces when they had bigger forces available. Whilst the Finnish forces had to be used again and again, the Russians actually employed only very few of their numerous divisions. The Air Force is the only arm which really seems to have been used on a fairly large scale—in a country where its effect was necessarily smaller than in any other country in Europe.

Towards the end of February there were signs that the Mannerheim Line was about to crack, and with the success of the Viborg drive the Mannerheim Line became untenable even on its left flank. The Finnish losses in material must have been very considerable, and that made any further defence very difficult. Both French and German military experts will no doubt study the operations with great care to discover the respective prospects of attack and defence where strongly fortified positions are concerned.

Finland had only a limited reserve of men and material at her disposal, and volunteers and supplies from abroad could not alter that fundamental fact. The really heavy Russian attacks would have taken place when weather conditions permitted the Russians to keep their northernmost troops supplied from the sea, and their one railway to be used

to its full capacity. No matter how heroic the resistance of the Finns, it would then have been useless against the masses of men and material the Russians could deploy. The six or ten thousand volunteers from Norway and Sweden and from other countries would have sacrificed their lives, and the Russians would have dictated peace.

### *Soviet Russia's Terms*

Towards the end of the first week in March—that is, at the beginning of the second half-year of the “big” war, and at the beginning of the second quarter of the “small” war in Finland—it became known that the Soviet Government had made a peace offer to the Finnish Government. It appeared that the Soviet Government had tried to secure the services of the British Government as an intermediary, but without success, and the Swedish Government then took over the task.

The Soviet peace offer was immediately answered by the Allied Powers with a promise of “immediate assistance to the full extent of their power” for the Finns in order to stiffen Finnish resistance. However, it was another question altogether whether such assistance could arrive in time and whether it would prove adequate when it did. In the meantime Finland was faced with much greater dangers than in winter. The thaw might hold up military operations for a while, and the Finnish lakes might offer a good chain of defences, but the Russians had already reached Viborg, and even established themselves on its far side,

so that they would have found it a comparatively easy task to deploy far more powerful forces than they had yet used.

The Russians had closed the harbour of Petsamo. Norway and Sweden both refused to permit troops to cross their territories, fearing with some justification that they would thereby be dragged into a conflict which might end in complete disaster for them. They had already demonstrated their support of Finland, and they had both sent volunteers and war material. Their caution forbade them to go further.

Soviet Russia's peace terms were severer than the proposals rejected by the Finns last November, but that was to be expected after the fighting. However, they do suggest that Soviet Russia is really after security and not imperialist expansion. The territory to be surrendered on the Carelian Isthmus is not very great, though it certainly does include Viborg, which is economically important to the Finns. The harbour of Hangö is to be leased to Soviet Russia for thirty years, and the narrow strip of territory between the White Sea and Finnish soil is to be widened somewhat; this, too, can be reasonably put down to the search for "security." The Soviet Government has abandoned the demand for the harbour of Petsamo, and asks only for the other half of the Ribachi or "Fishermen's" Peninsula. This is apparently the most important concession made to the Finns, though the harbour is to be demilitarized. The demand for free passage without customs control across Finnish territory to Norway and Sweden certainly goes beyond "security" as such, but

seeing that it is to apply to goods traffic only it represents no threat to either of these countries.

The most important political implication for Finland is that the sham Kuusinen Government has been let drop. Finland is to retain her political independence, and she placed this on record immediately by her decision to begin negotiations with Norway and Sweden for the conclusion of a Three-Power defensive alliance.

A further political consequence is that the friendship between Finland and Germany, which has existed since the end of the World War, is now at an end. The Russians can book this as a success over their ostensible "allies." This may be taken as a further indication that Churchill was not far wrong when he suggested that the key to the Russian "enigma" might be found in Russia's national interests.

It is quite possible to contend that Finland has been sacrificed by her friend Nazi Germany, which always intended to use her as a barrier against Communism. A real attack against Soviet Russia in Europe could be launched only via Germany and through the Baltic, which is commanded by Germany. The key positions for the final attack were, however, in the hands of the Finns. Nazi Germany's intentions towards Soviet Russia are sufficiently well known to spare us the trouble of going into details. It is true that the Nazis have adopted a different tone towards her for the moment, but that is a matter of necessity, and no fundamental importance should be attached to it by Soviet Russia, or is it likely to be.

With the gains of the Russians in Finland any

invasion of Soviet Russia, after the war with Hitler, will be a very much more difficult problem, because by that time the Russians will have fortified all strategic defensive points. They have obtained far more than they could possibly have obtained if Finland had agreed to all their original demands.

There is no reliable evidence one way or the other to indicate whether, now that her Finnish campaign has been successful, Soviet Russia will turn against Scandinavia. Her original demands to Finland were exclusively designed to give her security against third-party attacks. An extension of Communism by fire and sword, such as we often hear ascribed to Communists, by no means fits into Soviet Russian theories. Trotsky, who upheld the theory of "permanent revolution," was banished and outlawed. It was he who argued that Communism could live only if it were extended—violently if need be—to other countries, whilst Stalin insisted on the practicability of "Socialism in one country alone." It is, to say the least of it, highly unlikely that Stalin will now choose the most unsuitable countries in Europe (and that the Scandinavian countries certainly are) for an experiment in the violent extension of Communism. On the other hand, he is likely to feel very much more secure now that he has the advanced bases he desired.

In the circumstances, an unprejudiced observer will probably come to the conclusion that the Russians really felt themselves threatened. However, it is possible that the general indignation which the action of Soviet Russia has produced may lead to far-reaching complications.



If military operations had been continued with the support of the Allied Powers it would have been only very conditionally in their interests. Although a second front might have been formed against Germany in the north, the military prospects of an expeditionary force fighting its way through to Poland in such a short space of time do not seem bright. Economically, too, there seems to have been little to gain, because despite all her boasts Nazi Germany has received very little material from Soviet Russia so far. For reasons which we have already discussed it seems very doubtful whether the Russians have any serious intentions of sending supplies to an extent which is likely to count, quite apart from the fact that it is doubtful whether even after the end of the war in Finland they will be in a position to do so, even if they feel inclined.

It is highly doubtful whether a great expenditure of Allied material on a far-off front, against an enemy in a much better position to bring up his own material, would at all be compensated for by the result. The material expended in the great spaces of Finland—or perhaps Soviet Russia—would be keenly missed elsewhere. Further, it is doubtful whether the Turks would welcome the extension of the war to their territory with any enthusiasm. In any case this would once again mean a weakening of the main front in France, and the only tangible result would be to stop a few hypothetical oil tankers sailing from Batum across the Black Sea to Varna. And by the way, even Soviet oil in Varna is by no means already in Berlin.

And on the other hand, Soviet Russia would finally be driven willy-nilly into Nazi Germany's arms, and a joint attack by both Powers on other fronts would then become inevitable. Roumania has already had a very disagreeable taste of what a German invasion means, and despite Carol's assurances it is quite likely that this time she would give way before an invasion rather than have to give way after. Quite a lot of disagreeable things might happen then. For instance, a new front might suddenly appear in the Mediterranean, and the new front in the east would then be directly threatened. Germany has already sent submarines into the Mediterranean by the overland route, and this time, with Soviet Russia's assistance, they could go by water all the way through Soviet Russia's new canals straight to the Black Sea.

Further, Fascist Italy might very well revise her attitude of "benevolent neutrality to both sides," and perhaps decide that she could get most out of it by joining the "Block from the Rhine to the Pacific."

Patience and strong nerves are both required in great measure for victory in this war of political manœuvres. The side which loses this war will be at a great disadvantage in the subsequent war of weapons. And one thing is quite certain, with the continuation of the war in the north the Finns, whom the Allied Powers wished to help, would have been more than decimated.

*Was Soviet Russia's Strength Over-estimated?*

The reverses suffered by the Red Army in the opening weeks of the campaign against Finland have caused many people to suppose that those critics were right after all who insisted that the Red Army was of very poor quality. This view is undoubtedly exaggerated. Economic construction in Soviet Russia is very far from being complete, and the country is in the middle of the third Five Year Plan, which is to be followed by further plans. The work that has so far been done has made the Red Army one of the biggest and technically most modern armies in the world. We have already seen why it temporarily failed in Finland, and this does not mean that it would fail even temporarily under other circumstances, at another time and on different terrain.

A long line of fortifications extends along the old Soviet-Polish frontier, and new fortifications are rapidly being erected along the new frontiers with Nazi Germany. If these fortifications are ever to be forced it will require the efforts of millions of men, who will have to be brought up and kept supplied over enormous distances. Neither could an attack from Roumania or from Turkey be launched under better conditions. The utter failure of the various armies of intervention during the civil war years, when their enemies were poorly armed, equipped, and organized, should serve as a warning against any over-optimistic hopes. In addition, the Red Army is a political army, and it cannot be driven willy-nilly into any war like its predecessor the Tsarist Army. We have already indicated that

its preliminary lack of success in Finland was due in part to this. However, in the event of an active and obvious threat to the security of Soviet Russia the situation would change radically.

The purely theoretical question of whether the Red Army would have been of much service in 1938 in the event of war to defend Czechoslovakia against Nazi aggression can be answered from this standpoint. In such circumstances Soviet troops would have marched into West White-Russia and the Ukraine perhaps with even greater justification than they did last year, because the Poles would then have been the allies of the Germans, or, at least, the enemies of the Czechs, for Poland lost no time in exploiting Czechoslovakia's difficulties to seize Czech territory. The Polish Army would certainly not have been in a position to render any serious assistance to the Germans. Competent observers now realize that the strength of the Polish Army was greatly overestimated.

At the same time, the value of the assistance which Soviet Russia could have rendered to the Western Powers as their ally has been underestimated. Nazi Germany would have had an enormously long front in the east, and her air campaign against the Poles would have been impossible for one thing, because the Poles would have been supplied with all the technical material which they did not have when they faced Nazi Germany alone. Of course, all these questions are purely theoretical, on account of the great weakness of her social structure which made Poland most anxious that her people should not come into any

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At the same time, the value of the assistance which Soviet Russia could have rendered to the Western Powers as their ally has been underestimated. Nazi Germany would have had an enormously long front in the east, and her air campaign against the Poles would have been impossible for one thing, because the Poles would have been supplied with all the technical material which they did not have when they faced Nazi Germany alone. Of course, all these questions are purely theoretical, on account of the great weakness of her social structure which made Poland most anxious that her people should not come into any

contact with Soviet troops, even as friends and allies.

It must always be borne in mind to-day that wars are no longer won merely by the possession of large numbers of men and large quantities of material. In many former wars soldiers were cannon-fodder pure and simple. Once a man was put into a uniform he had to fight, willy-nilly. To-day the position is different. The question of morale has become much more important. Modern soldiers have their own ideas of justice. For instance, the soldiers recruited from Poland's national minorities were quite definitely unwilling to fight against Germany for Poland, and it is possible that many Red soldiers were unwilling to fight against Finland, though this did not prevent Soviet Russia's enforcing victory with her vast supplies of men and material. In a war in which Soviet Russia is obviously attacked, on the other hand, there will be no unwillingness to fight on the part of the Russian people.

Thus the question of whether the strength of the Red Army has been generally under-estimated or over-estimated must depend for its answer on who the enemy is, on who is the attacker and who the attacked. This is true not only of Soviet Russia but more or less of every State in the world to-day. It is not only military experts who are inclined to forget this important fact, but also politicians.

## *Chapter Ten*

### WAR AIMS AND THE PROSECUTION OF WAR

EVEN an attacked country has its war aims, and they do not consist merely of winning the war. The tragedy of the World War was that it was not possible to establish a new world order afterwards owing to the great divergence of interests. As an expedient the League of Nations was formed, but although President Wilson of the United States was the prime mover in the matter, his country finally decided to keep out of the venture altogether. Defeated Germany was deliberately excluded from the League for a long time, whilst Soviet Russia had no intention of joining. The League steadily deteriorated as an international authority; and finally Italy, a member, was allowed to attack and subjugate Abyssinia, also a member, and then Albania, without effective intervention from the League. In the case of Czechoslovakia, members of the League of Nations even assisted a declared and bitter enemy of the League to carve up a member State and render her helpless for the final operation which wiped her off the map altogether. Gradually all the provisions of the League Covenant which might have been utilized to give the League some real power were abolished or deliberately allowed to fall into abeyance.

Since the end of the World War the development of modern armaments has been so tremendous that not even the biggest and most powerful States are quite safe against a sudden attack by an enemy.



The agitation of the Fascist States against the principle of collective security aimed at abolishing the last remnants of international security and co-operation, and leaving the Fascist States free to attack and dispose of their enemies one by one.

The war in which Europe is engaged to-day is the logical result of this false policy. To-day no Cabinet Minister makes a speech without admitting it, or promising his people a new world order after this war, but up to the present no one has worked out any practical plans for world reconstruction. Apparently the planning of it is being left to the future, when it is probable that statesmen will be just as helpless as they were at the peace conferences of 1919, and will perhaps adopt some similarly dangerous expedient instead of getting to real grips with the problem.

Now war aims have a very definite effect on the prosecution of war and on the course of the war itself. It is quite certain, for instance, that the Western Powers are refraining from bombing German towns for other reasons than the fear of reprisals. From the first moment of the war Allied statesmen have solemnly declared that the Western Powers are not making war against the German people but against Hitler and National Socialism. In the first weeks of the war, whilst Nazi Germany had her hands full in Poland, it would have been very easy for the Western Powers to have altered the face of the war entirely by launching a real air offensive against Germany. Instead their propaganda adopted the motto "War against Hitler, not against the German people!" That was quite an

effective slogan, but it will not remain so indefinitely unless something else is done.

Hitler had his counter-slogan, which declared that he was fighting to prevent a new partitioning of Germany, which he said was the aim of his enemies, and this idea was so hammered into the heads of the German people, who were cut off from the outside world, that it proved more effective than the other. Defensive weapons have always in the long run proved themselves more effective than offensive weapons, and this principle is not confined to the battle-field.

We have already pointed out that the weapon of purely political warfare, the weapon of agitation, is the weapon of the weaker side, which fears reprisals, and that the stronger side must prove its strength unless it is prepared to be considered weak. Negative warfare must be supported by positive warfare. This is true of war aims, too, as far as they concern Germany. The slogan, "War against Hitler and not against the German people!" is not enough in the long run. It is too negative, and it should be accompanied by some positive assurance which is calculated to counteract Goebbels's slogan against a partitioning of Germany in the event of an Allied victory.

The unification of Germany after centuries of political atomization was such a tremendous political and economic gain that all attempts at disuniting her instituted after the World War had just the contrary effect. The Hitler movement was greatly assisted by the fact that attempts were made to disturb Germany's political unity from Bavaria, the part of Germany in which

Hitlerism first became a power to be reckoned with.

However, not even an authoritative statement from the Western Powers that they have no intention of partitioning Germany after the war is sufficient. The question immediately arises: what sort of Government must be established in Germany once Hitler is defeated? To-day Germany is being ruled by a clique which has only a very small section of the population behind it, and after the overthrow of Hitler the world will be astonished to discover how few Germans in reality are willing to associate themselves with the present regime, and how many have followed Hitler's banners more or less under duress. The great danger is that a new clique heavily backed from outside will be set up, and that new inner-political and foreign-political complications will result, which might prove no less serious in their effects than those which existed before.

Thanks to long years of agitation, Nazi Germany's generals still enjoy the greatest measure of confidence amongst the rulers of Western Europe, who for a long time regarded them as enemies of Hitler. Even now they are considered capable of taking power in Germany and creating order. Once before they were entrusted with that task by the weak Reich's Government which was in office in Germany just after the World War, and they took full advantage of the position. The result was a whole series of political assassinations and then the *Putsch* launched by Kapp in March 1920. The *Putsch* failed, but it cost the lives of thousands of people. The so-called "Soviet Republic" in

Munich in 1919 was really a reaction to the establishment of the generals' dictatorship in the rest of Germany.

It was whilst the generals were in the saddle and the various governments merely their prisoners, that the "Black Reichswehr," the basis of a larger army, was formed. Detailed plans for fortifications on both the eastern and western frontiers were drawn up, and democratic politicians who exposed the war-mongering activity of the generals were flung into prison for treason. Behind this regime were the foreign credits granted to reconstruct Germany's economic system. Credits would probably have been refused to any other regime.

The coming "war of revenge" was preached systematically, and reactionary ideology was hammered into the student youth of the country. The generals were behind von Papen's coup against the Prussian Government in 1932, and it was the generals who finally cleared the path for Hitler's accession to power. Naturally, they themselves were the instruments of another class, which has now a representative abroad in the person of Herr Thyssen, to create an alibi for itself after the end of this war.

It was these same generals who carried out all Hitler's conquests and are now waging this war for him. They have, in fact, every reason to feel grateful to him. Their tool, Hitler, created opportunities of advancement for them such as seldom exist in an army. Nazi Germany has the youngest generals and the youngest staff officers in Europe, and anyone is mistaken who thinks they are going to submit tamely to being divested of their power

and authority after the war. And yet a new era of generals' rule in Germany would, after a very short space of time, mean another triumph for reaction and a new cry for a war of revenge.

The vast experiment in self-sufficiency carried out in Germany has caused terrible economic exhaustion, and Germany needs a period of peace in which she can build up her trade again. The burdens of an enormous army are intolerable and they must be reduced. Is it possible to imagine that the generals would agree to put themselves on the back list after having triumphantly climbed to power? They would have to reckon with a powerful opposition, and their only answer to its criticisms would be further repression. Civil war would be the result, civil war and rebellions, which would seriously interfere with the work of reconstruction. The German Army and its leaders are the most unsuitable instruments for peace in Germany and the rest of the world. The generals took the oath to the Kaiser, and then to all the governments of the Weimar Republic in succession, and finally to Hitler, and they were prepared to break their solemn pledges at a moment's notice if it seemed in their own interests to do so. In a new German State they would find it just as easy to take a new oath to some new government as they would to break it at the first moment which suited them.

It is not possible, as we have seen again and again, to control the affairs of a big country effectively from outside. For one secret arms dump which is discovered and confiscated there are ten which are never discovered. Real justice can exist only in a

free State, justice executing the will of a peaceable people.

There is at the moment a second, so to speak a covert, clique of generals, who are already making themselves felt and filing their aspirations, and it would seem that they are being taken seriously. After the Munich explosion on 8th November 1939 it was Hitler himself who unwittingly made tremendous propaganda for his former party chief Strasser, when he accused him of complicity in a crime the world suspects was Hitler's own. Strasser is a former Nazi, who differs from the Nazis in power merely in the belief that he is the true representative of German power ideology, whilst Hitler is a degenerate Nazi. Strasser resigned from the Nazi Party when Hitler was supposed to have betrayed it, and there was some prospect that the group of Otto Strasser and his brother Gregor (afterwards murdered in the June 1934 purge) would come into office, at least in Prussia.

Politically, Otto Strasser has successively watered down his programme; his anti-Semitism has been made more moderate and he has developed a confused economic programme. He finances his movement in part with a loan which he has floated and which is to be realizable a few months "after the seizure of power" by him and his friends. The coupons run in two series marked "A" and "J" respectively. One of the coupon pushers who showed them to me assured me that series "A" is sold only to Aryans and series "J" only to Jews. Jewish men of money who may feel tempted will probably have sufficient acumen to realize why the strange distinction is made.

In the group which goes under Otto Strasser's name, and which is now preparing for power, is Dr Rauschning, the former Nazi Mayor of Danzig. Rauschning has written two very interesting and useful books about Hitler, but this hardly makes him a suitable candidate for government office in post-war Germany. That Dr Rauschning could become a National Socialist and remain one for many years tells us something of the man. He is nothing but a disappointed Nazi who felt that in its outward forms the movement was going too far, but who was nevertheless, as his long years of Nazi membership prove, in agreement with the fundamental principles of the movement. Even more, by his silence he assisted in cloaking the crimes of his fellow-Nazis. For instance, it was 1940 before he publicly admitted in an interview that he had been informed personally, by a prominent Nazi, that the burning of the Reichstag had been planned and executed at the orders of Hitler and Goering. After having been told that, he still remained a member of the Nazi Party for eighteen months, and for seven years afterwards he kept his mouth shut and made no protest against the attempt to execute innocent people for the Nazi crime.

Former German Nationalists like Treviranus are also mentioned, together with the Strasser group, as possible candidates for government office, but their claims are questionable in the extreme. They never represented more than a small percentage of the electorate, and they always vigorously upheld the interests of the generals and of the reaction. These were the people who lent Hitler their support in order to give him a majority in the Reichstag.

It was they who sabotaged all honest peace efforts, demanded an absolute breach with the Entente Powers, and damned every attempt at reconciliation between the former enemies of the World War as treason to Germany. Their leader, Hugenberg, was openly in favour of the seizure of Ukrainia by Germany, though it would have been possible only after the destruction of Czechoslovakia and Poland. They were also the founders and leaders of the "Stahlhelm," which was at one time the strongest of the reactionary semi-military organizations, and was later incorporated in the Nazi Storm Troops.

These individuals and groups may come forward with very specious programmes, but if the statesmen of Western Europe are wise they will treat them with the utmost caution. Not even Bruening would awaken any enthusiasm in Germany to-day. It was under his rule that the reaction became open and the formal remains of democracy were gradually liquidated. The German people will hardly have forgotten that.

Once the war is at an end, and Hitler out of the way, no doubt a host of "has-beens" will come forward to remind the world of their former services and claim recognition. There is every likelihood that in their ranks will be such a well-known figure as Dr Schacht, who is at present holding himself in the background. He has turned his political coat so often that another turn will not matter to him. As a Democrat and a friend of the Social Democrats he became the confidant of the Social-Democratic Reich's President, Ebert, and President of the Reichsbank. Later on he decided that the reactionary camp offered him better prospects, and



there he remained, working his way gradually towards National Socialism.

Schacht enjoyed a certain amount of confidence abroad because under his guidance Germany's finance system kept working somehow, but it was overlooked that it worked only against the interests of Germany's creditors and in the interests of the Nazis. Schacht always had a good nose, and always skipped off the sinking ship before it went under with him. Perhaps his nostrils are twitching again. In any case, he is holding himself in the background, no doubt in the hope that later he will be able to come forward as a saviour and secure a fat job.

Herr Thyssen, who left Germany when National Socialism developed in unexpected directions to his personal discomfort, must be counted in the Schacht group. When he financed Hitler's rise to power he had not foreseen all the consequences. He made no protest against the Nazi brutalities when they were notorious all over the world, but he is beginning to protest now that he feels things are going none too well with the regime. He was not only one of the main financial supporters of the Nazis, but by his financial policy he paved the way for their rise to power. He was one of the founders of the *Vereinigte Stahlwerke* (United Steel Corporation), whose financial basis was unhealthy from the beginning and which finally swallowed milliards of marks and threw into chaos Germany's stock exchanges and her finance system.

All these would-be "democratic regents" occupy the front of the stage in the World Press, but it would be as well not to forget that there are

men in Nazi Germany still who have been fighting the Nazi regime for the past seven years, and that they would like something to say concerning the future construction of Germany. "Democracy" in Germany will be an utter farce unless the German people are consulted. They have already borne burdens whose real significance will be understood only after Hitler has been hurled from power. They will not be willing to bow their heads to another clique of dictators once they have got rid of Hitler, whether the new dictatorship is semi-Nazi or completely military.

The Strasser group is a very small group within the National Socialist Party in Germany. No doubt amongst its members are some really honest enemies of Hitler, but most of them are just enemies of Hitler and not enemies of the Nazi system. From the beginning the Strasser group was a sect; it is so to-day, and is likely to remain so. In any case, a man who was for years one of Hitler's chief supporters and most active propagandists, can hardly claim to be a very suitable representative for a people sick and tired of Hitlerism.

The support enjoyed by the former German Nationalists, and all the other little groups, is a negligible part of the 80 millions of people who make up the German Reich to-day.

Any attempt to set up "the democracy of a little group" in Germany after the war would inevitably lead to civil war. The cause of the many disturbances which took place in Germany after the World War was the unwillingness of masses of the German people to be saddled once again with the rule of the old reactionary groups which had plunged

them into the war, and now suddenly appeared again under the name of "People's Party" and what not, to organize "the war of revenge" under the cloak of Democracy.

The same sort of intrigues and back-stair influences on behalf of old reactionary cliques is also going on in Austria. I am not an Austrian, but I do not find it difficult to imagine what sort of a face the Austrians, workers and peasants, will pull when they hear that "their future Kaiser Otto" is being "respectfully received" by influential circles abroad, and that their opinions are not to be asked. It must not be forgotten that little Dollfuss needed artillery to make a continuation of his dictatorship possible, and it is unlikely that the Austrians who heaved such a sigh of relief when they dumped the Habsburgers in 1918 are likely to tolerate foreign influences sending them in by the back door again.

This would be even more true of the people of Germany if any attempt were made to saddle them with a Hohenzollern again, or indeed any of the numerous princes and princelings they rid themselves of in 1918. Not one of these many illustrious personages has had the courage to condemn the Nazi regime openly or to work against it in any way. On the contrary, many of them have openly co-operated with the regime and accepted high posts under it.

Well, what is to be done? First of all, what should not be done is to encourage little cliques who seek to cover up their past mistakes and their present lack of support in Germany by loud propaganda outside. In 1919 many people, in-

cluding wide circles in Germany itself, believed in the change of heart of the reaction, and placed their trust in democratic programmes. When the reaction was firmly in the saddle in Germany the French intervened and occupied the Ruhr district, but only because the German reaction deliberately sabotaged the payment of reparations, and not in order to prevent Hindenburg and the other generals misruling Germany and finally handing it over to the Nazi dictatorship.

Militarily Hindenburg was no doubt what his old subordinate General Hoffmann called him, "a venerable cipher," adding: "Towards the end of the war we no longer bothered to tell him where our divisions were," but at least he was a man who understood very well how to look after his own interests and those of the clique he represented. His tax defalcations and those of his son, and in particular the swindles with the notorious "Eastern Relief Fund," were vigorously exploited by the Nazis to keep him in line when they came to power.

The German people have been, and still are, wrongly accused of being militaristic. The truth is that they are just as much, and just as little, democratic as any other people in Europe. Let them once have the opportunity of ruling themselves, and the world will see that they have learned the lessons of the past few years, and in particular that they have learned the value of democratic rights and liberties, though as yet they may not openly proclaim their allegiance to them. When Hitler declares that he has "the German people" behind him he is telling a thumping lie. The German people will take the first chance that comes of

certainly as the old League has been discredited. We have already seen what will happen and are still helplessly looking on at the result.

Quite definitely the new world order will be impossible without initial sacrifices by the victor States as well. If war is really banished from the world, then there will be no need for experiments in economic self-sufficiency, or "autarchy," and no need for war economy, but it will be necessary to create greater facilities open to all countries to obtain colonial raw materials. Colonial resources should be jointly administered for the benefit of the whole world, and it would be better to administer them on a business basis rather than on a State or semi-State basis. This will be one of the most important tasks of the new world order. In this way it would be much easier to assist the plundered Czechs, Poles, and Austrians to their feet than by the imposition of reparations which Germany would doubtless find herself unable to pay.

Nazi Germany, so we were told at the beginning of the year, proposes to call a conference of the neutral Powers, no doubt with the intention of exerting further pressure on them to force them into line with her. It will hardly prove possible to call a counter-conference and discuss the new international world order during the war, and much less to begin its erection, but a gathering of politicians and economists might be called to discuss plans for it freely and openly, and thus help to clarify the situation in the public mind. There will be no other way in view of the failure of all the "economic conferences," armed with authority

but neutralized by the diverging interest of the big States.

The great point is that it is hardly possible to do things in this direction too soon, whereas it might be much too late to do them when the war is already over, and when work would have to begin under entirely new material and psychological conditions. Our aim must be to shorten the war and ameliorate its evil consequences. The best way to do this is to create an atmosphere of confidence as rapidly as possible in order to deprive the Nazis of their most powerful propaganda cards in Germany.

In his speech on 30th January Hitler delivered his usual tirade, in which he announced that the Allied Powers were preparing a new Versailles Treaty to crush and humiliate Germany. If the statesmen of Western Europe were to take the wind out of his sails by preparing effective measures for the establishment of a new world order they would be performing more than one of the many propaganda tasks this war makes necessary: they would be winning a strategic success of great importance.

### *The New Europe*

Opinions are divided about the reconstruction of Europe after the war. In *The Sunday Times* of 18th February "Atticus" reports a discussion he had with the Hungarian Legitimist, Count Sigray. Sigray's plan for Central Europe is the revival of the old Habsburg Empire in a new form to include

Austria, Hungary, and the three "separate" states Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. Archduke Otto is the candidate for royal honours. "Atticus" comments:

"There is much sympathy for his plan in France, although here in Britain it is received with what Gilbert described as modified rapture."

The Czechs, who represent the majority of the population not only of Bohemia but also of Moravia, cannot have the least desire to put themselves into the hands of a Habsburg. They have not fought for three hundred years to free themselves from the Habsburg yoke, only to capitulate weakly to the same tyranny, rehashed after the defeat of Hitler. Whether young Otto von Habsburg is a capable man or not, the fact remains that "Habsburg" is anathema to the peoples of Central Europe, and the re-establishment of a Habsburg monarchy would certainly be against the will of the great majority, including most of the Austrian people proper. No amount of propaganda will alter this fact.

When the Press refers to Hungary it means the Hungarian magnates, who still rule with a rod of iron in the last stronghold of feudalism in civilized Europe. These magnates represent only an infinitesimal percentage of the population of Hungary compared with the millions of common people, who have learnt much during the past twenty-six years. This is true to an even greater extent of the other countries which are to be roped in.

Czechoslovakia, for instance, was a modern and progressive State. Constituting itself a republic, it recovered from the consequences of the war very rapidly, and its economic system made astounding

progress. It included the district known in Central Europe as Carpathian Russia and in Western Europe as Ruthenia. After many hundreds of years of neglect this area was a sort of reserve of feudal backwardness. When Ruthenia was occupied by Hungarian troops a Hungarian who had lived some time in Czechoslovakia said to me: "If Hungarians want to see what a real town looks like and can't go to Budapest they can now go to Munkacz." Under Czech rule the place had changed out of all knowledge. Ruthenia was being drawn into the orbit of modern European civilization.

It was the same with much of Slovakia. Naturally it was not possible to do everything in one generation, but what could be done within the framework of a democratic State, towards civilized progress, was done in Czechoslovakia. Here and there perhaps even too much was done. Modern development proceeded so rapidly that it was necessary to send Czech officials, teachers, lawyers, and other experts into Slovakia because backward Slovakia could not supply enough herself. This fact and the centralization which was necessary did something to create ill-feeling against the Czechs, but given normal development Slovakia would have produced her own intellectual *élite*, and the Czechs would gradually have disappeared from the administration. But with the advent of Hitler, adventurers, little local patriots, and often corrupt elements, swarmed around and clamoured for government posts in the new "State," which could otherwise have never existed. In any case, there is not the slightest justification for including the



country in a new Habsburg monarchy. At the first sign of real weakness on the part of Nazi Germany the Czechs will revolt, just as they revolted successfully in 1918 before Kaiser Karl had abdicated in Vienna, and Kaiser Wilhelm in Berlin. And if there is one thing a prophet might easily take his oath on, it is that they will not call on the services of a Habsburger. If any attempt is made subsequently to impose one on them from outside the result will be disaster. The new Czechoslovakian Republic may be a little different from the old, but it must include Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia as before.

If new frontiers are to be created in Europe, they must not this time be formed artificially without respect for the interests and opinions of the populations involved. In the period which led up to this war there was great talk about a Danubian Federation. The Little Entente was a good beginning, and in more favourable times it might have been developed into something bigger. But for the moment, no one knows what the great Danubian basin is going to look like after the war. If the war continues to be prosecuted in the present fashion then a *fait accompli* may be brought about long before the British and French advance guards cross the Rhine.

And what about Hungary? Since 1919 the Hungarian people have been held down under the severe dictatorship of a small caste. Up to the present the leaders of this group have not thought fit to invite a Habsburg back, and the Legitimists of the Count Sigray school represent only a section of it. It is possible, of course, that Sigray's way of

thinking has gained adherents, but, even so, it represents only a minute fraction of the Hungarian people.

And is it likely that the old Balkan States, Yugoslavia and Roumania, will greet a Habsburg monarchy with any enthusiasm? Hungary and the House of Habsburg both claim land which is, and has been since the World War, within the frontiers of these two countries. The Habsburgs would have to support Hungary's claims willy-nilly if they hoped for Hungarian sympathy. The result in Yugoslavia and Roumania is not difficult to imagine. Indeed, it is quite possible that the Habsburgs would prove a serious obstacle to the formation of a real Danubian Federation.

Who knows what these States will look like after the war? Under pressure they have been compelled to accept an economic *rapprochement* with Nazi Germany, and to a certain extent with Fascist Italy. Exports to Germany will cease to a great extent at the end of the war, and even now the fate of their commercial claims for goods supplied is doubtful. A very severe economic crisis must be expected; and it will aggravate the usual post-war crisis, even if these countries should take no actual part in hostilities. Further, their peoples are by no means content with their present forms of government, and the publication of loyal and devoted telegrams of greetings does not represent a reliable basis on which to judge their real feelings.

After the war it may be impossible to prevent gallant Fascist Italy making a dive for the spoils in the Balkans in accordance with her traditional policy. She has already obtained a good foothold

by her conquest of Albania. Imagine then a hotch-potch of discontented peoples squeezed into a reach-me-down Habsburg Empire on the one hand, and the rest equally discontented under Fascist Italy's thumb. Two fine federations at each others' throats. That would be a much worse state of affairs than a loose federation of independent States.

At any rate, none of these problems will ever be satisfactorily solved without the democratic consent of the peoples concerned. Any attempt at a solution by compulsion would inevitably lead to revolts, and the forced establishment of a new Habsburg monarchy would undoubtedly create a new Spain as a plague-spot of Europe. In fact it would be worse than Spain, because both national and social differences would clash far more violently in Central Europe than they did in Spain before the civil war. In Spain, though all opposition has been stifled for the moment, Franco's dictatorship represents no final settlement.

The revolts which will take place in Europe are likely to be bloody and violent. For instance, in Czechoslovakia the hatred generated by Nazi brutalities is likely to turn at first against everything German, and it will be very difficult to prevent irreparable damage. On the other hand, the Austrians are also Germans, though this does not mean that they must necessarily be included in a German Reich. There is nothing to choose between Austria's Nazis and Germany's. The establishment of a Habsburg monarchy would give these and other reactionary elements the best possible chance of slipping back into power again. It was just these

people who regarded Hitler as their saviour from the horrible fate of living under a republic. And will the Czechs be expected to wait patiently and watch the approaching danger of their resubjugation by these people?

Roumania's economic system would be vitally affected by a German crisis, whilst Bulgaria's import and export trade is 50 per cent German. In short, inflammable material is piled up everywhere: all it needs is the spark. In Hungary we have an assorted collection of Legitimists, Monarchists pure and simple, Republicans, Hungarian Nazis, Totalitarians of various schools, Democrats, Socialists, Communists, and Anti-Semites. In Germany a "strong-arm" dictatorship wielded by the generals, either the old, or the new and lesser known ones, is being canvassed as a solution, and in the Danubian basin the analogous solution is a Habsburg monarchy. Now Habsburg is only a name, and the Habsburg monarchy would be the cloak for a dictatorship over many peoples who have no intention of submitting tamely to anything of the sort. In short, the establishment of a Habsburg monarchy is the obvious recipe for the production of the maximum amount of trouble in Central Europe.

And what is to happen to the Germans who have now been magnanimously freed by Hitler in Austria and Czechoslovakia, and remain to be liberated in Hungary, Roumania, and Yugoslavia? In Austria they are thought to be so different from the Germans in the Reich that they require a State of their own. In Czechoslovakia, where they were formerly more Austrian than the Austrians, they

have been handed over to Hitler. What is to happen to them after the war? The new Germany will not be particularly anxious to acquire the numerous Nazis amongst them again. As far as these Germans are concerned they would probably be quite content to live in a State in which they were fairly well off, and Germany will at best need some time before she will be able to recover. In the inflation period 1922-1923 the Sudeten Germans cut a fine dash with their good Czech currency, and it was only very much later that they changed their views. The Munich Agreement gave them to Nazi Germany, where they are now living under a dictatorship. At the same time Czechoslovakia was destroyed both politically and economically, and deprived of her natural defences. Much could be done here to repair old mistakes, and much will have to be done to restore good relations between Germans and Czechs.

Poland presents us with quite a different picture. A country with a Slav population has been carved up. "Race - related" Ukrainians and Byelo-Russians felt no particular desire to remain in Poland. The east of Germany is inhabited by Germans who are "racially" more akin to the Poles than their language would suggest. Is Poland to be restored in her old form? And should parts of Silesia and East Prussia be added to it, as some Poles demand? The solution learnt from Hitler of transferring whole populations appears very simple. In reality, however, it would completely confuse the economic system of Europe and create permanent political unrest. The rights granted to national minorities were originally inadequate,

and in their application they became still more so, primarily because there was no supervising and controlling body. Are minority rights to be abolished altogether therefore, or made superfluous by abolishing the minorities themselves?

A new Germany overpopulated with millions of Germans pitchforked back from the east, the south-east, and from Italy, would slide from one economic crisis into the next, and represent a source of unrest for a very long time. Military measures would be worse than useless. An economic system cannot be made to work with machine-guns. However, it is to be hoped that by that time the rulers of Western Europe will have realized the appalling effect on the rest of the world of a broken-down German economic system.

The victorious countries will also be shaken by a post-war economic crisis. The burden of debt will increase, and it will be impossible even to try the old solution of "making Germany pay," which proved such a dismal and costly failure at the end of the last war. Demobilization and the adaptation of the economic system to peace-time production will cause great unemployment. The war itself will bring about economic reshuffling on a wide scale, and the middle classes will be the chief sufferers. It was the dispossessed middle and lower-middle classes which first became revolutionary (in a reactionary sense) in Germany and provided Hitler with his mass following.

All these questions, and others which will arise, urgently demand that there shall be some superior body or court in which reason may hope to triumph over power-politics. "Germany will pay," they

said in the Allied countries during the last war. "Britain, France, and Russia will pay," said the Germans. It is high time that the nations of Europe realized that the security they all desire cannot be obtained by violence.

#### ARE THERE STILL NEUTRAL POWERS?

We have already pointed out that even if the Balkan States remain neutral they will not be immune from the consequences of the war. They are not the only ones. Even during the last war it was doubtful whether real neutrality was possible. To-day it is still more doubtful. This does not mean that all the so-called neutral Powers will have to take an active part in the war, but it does mean that they will all be drawn into it in one way or the other, on one side or the other. Nazi Germany did her preparatory work in this respect very early on, and she is now demanding from the neutral Powers that they should accept a novel interpretation of the conception of neutrality. The same is true of Italy, and the Western Powers are now beginning to follow Nazi Germany's example.

The August 1939 number of the German publication *Monatsheft für Auswärtige Politik* (*Foreign Political Monthly*) has an article dealing with the new codification by Fascist Italy of belligerent rights. For instance, she claims that a blockaded area need not necessarily be mined off, and that warships have the right to call on neutral shipping to alter its course. From that to capture is only a step. Nazi

Germany has a new interpretation of what constitutes a breach of neutrality and it would cover almost anything. During the past few months it has been put into practice more than once.

The same number of the *Monatsheft für Auswärtige Politik* publishes an article on the Press and neutrality. The idea is that Powers which wish to maintain their neutrality must see to it that no "misuse of the Press" takes place, as this might be interpreted as "an un-neutral attitude." The freedom of the Press in neutral countries should be limited even in peace-time. To demonstrate the point the case of Belgium is quoted. This choice is particularly interesting because we now know that Belgium had been marked down as one of the first victims amongst the neutral Powers to be pounced on and swallowed by Germany. Any attack on Germany in the Belgian Press could have been interpreted as a breach of Belgian neutrality, whereupon the Nazi leaders would have claimed themselves entitled to attack Belgium. In conclusion the article declares:

"Recently it has been pointed out that the Belgian Constitution of 1831 (in noteworthy distinction to the Swiss Constitution, which is fully aware of the possibility of the misuse of the Press) lays down the freedom of the Press as a statute, and Article 18 declares: 'The Press is free, and on no account may a censorship be introduced.'"

In practice, Press criticism could be construed as a violation of neutrality simply by representing it as partisan, malicious, or tendentious.

This well-prepared legal interpretation of Press neutrality has already been utilized by Dr Goebbels.



On 13th February he delivered a speech before 500 officials of the German Reich and the Nazi Party in which he declared significantly that it was impossible to draw any distinction between the proclaimed neutrality of a country and the attitude of its public opinion. A few days previously he had expressed similar opinions in an interview given to the representatives of the neutral Press in Berlin, when he declared that the neutrality proclamations of countries and their governments were hypocritical if the Press was allowed to express other opinions. Under German pressure, for instance, Rauschning's book on his talks with Hitler was suppressed by the Swiss Government, and on innumerable occasions Nazi Germany's diplomatic representatives in Holland, Belgium, and the Scandinavian States have exerted similar pressure.

Nazi Germany's own interpretation is, of course, thoroughly one-sided. Sweden is neutral in supplying her with iron ore, and un-neutral in similarly supplying Great Britain. In fact, Nazi Germany finds it un-neutral that Sweden should conduct any trade whatever with Great Britain. Naturally, it is quite in accordance with Nazi standards that Nazi Germany should demand the strictest possible neutrality as long as it favours herself, and an un-neutral and hostile attitude towards her enemies. She is well aware that there is not a single country in the world which is really favourable to her cause, but at least she is determined as far as possible to prevent any expression of antipathy to herself or of sympathy for her enemies.

Roumania, in particular, is in a difficult situation. She is between two fires. The greater part of her

oil industry is in Franco-British hands, but Nazi Germany desperately wants the oil and is constantly threatening violence unless she gets it. When pressure was being put on Belgium, she was asked to hand over several hundred goods waggons, which Nazi Germany could then have used to facilitate her own mobilization measures, whilst Belgium herself would have been correspondingly weakened.

Hundreds of neutral seamen have been done to death by German mines and submarines, and neutral shipping is being sent to the bottom at an even higher rate than the shipping of the Allied Powers. Neutral trade is being reduced, and official and unofficial rationing is being introduced as in the belligerent countries. During the Russo-Finnish conflict Nazi Germany announced that she would regard any taking of sides as a breach of neutrality. For all these reasons the neutral Powers are now treading their way with extreme caution. The Norwegians even closed their eyes to the illegitimate use of Norwegian territorial waters by the Nazi *Altmark* for the transport of British merchant seamen prisoners back to Germany. But this got her into still worse trouble when a British destroyer entered Norwegian territorial waters, attacked the *Altmark*, and freed the prisoners.

To-day all the important neutral Powers are voting military and naval budgets which are not much lower than they would be in actual war-time (at least in a war such as this has been so far). After the war their economic systems will need a long time to recover, longer than they did after the last war, in which most of them did very well indeed.

In the present era of mechanized warfare mobilization is a more costly business than it used to be. All the neutrals have their troubles, and none of them knows when and by what accident or by what foreign policy over which he has no control he will be dragged unwillingly into the war.

## *Chapter Eleven*

### WILL GERMANY ATTACK?

THERE are probabilities in warfare, but never certainties. Two belligerent camps always face each other, and each strives to keep its intentions secret from the other and, if possible, to take the other by surprise. The surprise may be that one side will do just what the other side had, with some justification, not expected. However, that is only a remote contingency, because neither side is likely to abandon reasonable possibilities altogether.

This war did not begin as the German political and military experts thought it would. They are now compelled to adapt themselves to the changed conditions, and to seek for some way in which to bring it to a victorious conclusion. The primary possibilities are political rather than military, though it must not be imagined that the Hitler system will give in before having tried its military strength to the full. Nazi Germany's leaders have the choice between a protracted form of siege warfare which may gradually drive the people of Germany, now held down by force and propaganda, into opposition against their rulers, or a swift military blow which would at least hold out some hopes of success. If there were demoralization at

home any offensive would be doomed to failure from the start.

It is possible that we shall now experience a fairly long period of political offensives launched in various parts of Europe, and whilst they are going on it is likely that the actual military fronts will remain comparatively quiet. At the same time Germany will probably concentrate her submarines and aeroplanes in a new offensive against Allied shipping. It is even possible that she will send all the submarines she has left and all those she has recently launched to strike a great blow, just as she did at the beginning of the war, and that she will not send them out in successive waves. And this may be accompanied by intensified air attack on shipping.

Up to the present, Germany has been able to accumulate munitions and material. Supplies from the Balkans and supplies which have slipped through other gaps in the blockade have permitted her stores to be constantly replenished. The day will come when Germany's rulers are faced with the question of whether to use the accumulations of arms, munitions, and oil, or whether they can reckon with a decline in the strength of the besiegers. If this question is settled in favour of the use of armed force because inner-political dangers seem predominant, then the Allies will have to reckon with an offensive whose careful organization and preparation will put everything they experienced in 1918 into the shade.

Where is this offensive likely to take place?

An attack on Sweden is not very likely, because Nazi Germany obtains all Sweden's available ores

and in the event of war she would certainly get less. In addition, landing operations are always dangerous undertakings and easily lead to serious set-backs. Further, British troops might appear on the scene to stiffen Swedish resistance. This is still more likely in the case of Norway. If the coasts of Norway were opened to Great Britain Nazi Germany's last hope of dominating the North Sea would be gone. The Scandinavian country which is in greatest danger of attack is Denmark, and the subjugation of this country would improve Nazi Germany's food situation quite considerably. The ruthless exploitation of Denmark's resources would produce far more food than Nazi Germany can at present obtain from her.

As far as Roumania is concerned an attack would inevitably cause the destruction of the oil-fields. Joint action against Roumania by Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia is not out of the question, but that would finally destroy the Berlin-Rome "Axis," because Italy feels herself called upon to play the role of a protector of the Balkan States. Trade relations between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy would also be disturbed. Up to the present Italy is at least displaying very benevolent neutrality towards Nazi Germany even though she has disappointed greater hopes. Italo-German friction would also be caused if there were an attack on Yugoslavia, and quite certainly if there were an attack on Hungary. At the beginning of the year Italy took advantage of Nazi Germany's preoccupation to consolidate her relations with Hungary. The visit of the Hungarian Foreign Minister Count Csaki to his Italian counterpart Count Ciano was

supposed to be directed against the Bolshevist danger, but in reality it was directed no less against Nazi Germany.

Naturally, we cannot know with certainty what Nazi Germany will do, and desperation can force a man or a country to adopt the wildest expedients, but at least we can say that the probabilities do not point to a German drive in any of these directions. Military and political circumstances will have to change very considerably before there is any real prospect of success there. The Nazis will remember, too, that in 1918 it was the Balkan front which was the first to collapse. To-day transport difficulties would play an even more important role than they did then. The quantities of materials to be transported would be considerably larger. There would be much greater masses of munitions to bring up, and a great number of motor vehicles, such as tanks, caterpillar tractors, and artillery, could not be transported by road. As we have seen, the condition of Nazi Germany's railways is by no means all that could be desired, and the condition of the Balkan railways is still worse. They would hardly be improved by war.

On the Western Front the likely battle front is considerably shorter than it was during the World War. The choice of attack sectors is limited, and the munition supplies can be brought up in less time and transported more easily to the spot where the decisive offensive is to take place. For this purpose the German military authorities will have a highly developed network of roads and in addition a much more efficient network of railways than they had in 1918 on conquered territory. For

these reasons, and in spite of air reconnaissance, the possibility of premature discovery on the part of the Allies is practically excluded.

The same is true of the bringing up of troops. The German authorities needed less than a week to bring up their men for the spring offensive in 1918, though, it is true, they had been gradually brought nearer and nearer the spot beforehand. To-day the greater part of the men required for an offensive can be concentrated in the German fortified lines without attracting attention, and the rest can be brought up at the last moment on lorries, etc., from considerable distances.

Intense patrolling activity is being carried out by the garrison of the Siegfried Line in order to prepare the troops for their future task, and any big offensive would have to begin with the mopping-up of all enemy advanced posts. We must not imagine that this preliminary work will be carried out successively or with pauses even of hours only. It will in all probability be carried out in one swoop, combined with the grand attack on the main lines behind them. When Germany's Storm Troops mop up the first of the Allied advanced posts the German tanks will already be on the move to roll forward over the first obstacles without opposition. At the same moment the defending artillery will be subjected to a terrific barrage in order to prevent its affording the defending infantry any effective protection.

Artillery fire designed to repulse enemy patrols is placed down in front of the defending front lines in order to make it difficult for the enemy to go forward, and to hamper his retirement with any



prisoners he may have taken. It is usually impossible to prevent enemy patrols advancing by laying down an artillery barrage, because the time between the moment he is discovered and the moment he attacks is usually too short. The second half of the task is also very difficult to perform, particularly in an offensive on a fairly large scale. The defending artillery is itself placed under a heavy barrage at once, and almost simultaneously the first waves of attacking infantry break through the barrage area. In any big German offensive every little detail will have been carefully studied and arranged in advance. In preparing for the invasion of Holland and Belgium, for instance, the German authorities knew the capacities and the temperaments of the individual officers commanding each sector. Nothing will be settled generally, everything will be worked out in individual detail. Even during the World War German patrol attacks were very carefully practised behind the German lines in a replica, built up according to air photographs, of the actual terrain of the patrol. Every man taking part knew exactly what he had to do, exactly how many steps would take him to the enemy lines, exactly where he had to cut the enemy wire and break through.

Any offensive against fortified positions will therefore begin with such an undertaking on a big scale, *i.e.* along the whole front on which the offensive is to take place, in order that it can be developed into a break-through at once. Fast tanks will roll forward protected by heavier tanks whose guns will have the task of destroying the anti-tank defences. Immediately behind the tanks

will be infantry carried in armoured vehicles. Simultaneously the attack from the air will begin. At least, that is the way such an offensive is being practised at Nazi Germany's "Armoured Weapon Schools."

When patrolling undertakings are carefully prepared in this way the German authorities reckon that they have an eighty-per-cent chance of success, and that makes them worth while. Naturally, where a big offensive is concerned it is not so easy to weigh up the chances mathematically: unforeseen obstacles are met with, unknown strong points are discovered in the defence, the tanks may be held up, thus delaying the whole programme. The attacking commander cannot know exactly how quickly the defence can bring up its reserves, or how far his airmen will be successful in preventing their arrival. If it were possible to reckon with an eighty-per-cent chance of success in a big offensive of this sort (or anything like eighty per cent) we may be quite certain that it would have been launched long ago.

Where is an offensive on the Western Front, if it comes, likely to be launched? The most suitable point must still be regarded as lying somewhere between Luxemburg and the Dutch frontier. In Luxemburg there is no armed enemy to be reckoned with, and although both Holland and Belgium would prove harder nuts to crack to-day than they would have done at the beginning of the war yet they would still not offer anything like the resistance to be expected from the Maginot Line. The object of an offensive through Luxemburg could only be to lend direct support to a simultaneous offensive

against Belgium, or perhaps, though less likely, against the Maginot Line. Only then would the Germans establish contact with French and British troops—if they left their fortified lines—but it would be in relatively unprotected terrain where they would hope to defeat them.

Even German military experts doubt, however, whether one mighty offensive could end the war in Nazi Germany's favour, but they certainly do not share the opinion of Captain Liddell Hart that an absolute superiority of three to one is necessary before there can be any hope of a successful offensive. Nazi Germany's military experts consider an absolute superiority "at the decisive point" to be necessary, but not an absolute superiority everywhere, and from the beginning the real object of the Siegfried Line was to make possible this absolute local superiority.

With the fortunate outcome of their big offensive the Germans hope to bring about the absolute superiority which will be necessary to end the war victoriously. The contradiction between the two theories of absolute and local superiority is therefore a seeming one only. Nazi Germany's military experts are thinking of the preliminary decision only and not of the decision in the war as a whole. In any case, the theory held in Nazi Germany's military circles quite definitely admits the feasibility of a military offensive on land, but whether such an offensive will be launched or not depends on the prospects of a real break-through followed by a pursuit as judged by those in authority. If they think the prospects are favourable enough to promise the subsequent establishment of that

absolute military superiority necessary to win the war they will certainly chance it.

We have emphasized throughout that technical and economic matters will demand far greater attention in the present war than in the last one. The increasing fire-power and motorization of a division cuts both ways. They tend to demand short, sharp, offensive wars, but on the other hand they make it more difficult than ever to wage this sort of war by requiring the accumulation of a vast amount of material in a very short space of time and in a comparatively restricted area.<sup>1</sup> Dislocation on the railways, or the blocking of only one important road to supplies, may very easily threaten the chances of success of the whole operation.

If the full utilization of the new weapons is rendered impossible by some breakdown in the supply system then the other extreme results, and we have a lengthening of the war and an aggravation of its difficulties. This is particularly dangerous to the side which has banked on a short war, and has been compelled to do so because it cannot stand the strain of a long one. In the present case the Power in that disagreeable situation is Nazi Germany.

When the danger of trouble at home seems greater than the dangers attendant on an offensive, then Germany will risk an offensive. But whatever happens, it is quite clear that a German offensive launched now or later will have to cope with far greater difficulties than it would have had at any

<sup>1</sup> Even during the World War there were often as many as 50,000 men engaged only in arranging the transport of men and material for the offensives which were launched by Germany during its final years.

earlier stage of the war, because to-day the Allied defensive positions are undoubtedly stronger than they were, and they are likely to become increasingly so. If Germany had flung all her forces into an offensive on the Western Front right at the beginning of the War she might have achieved a preliminary success. Perhaps that preliminary success would then have led to a long-drawn-out war, as it did in 1914, and again on French and Belgian territory. Hitler found the undertaking too risky. It is far more risky to-day.

The situation remains that although Hitler took the initiative in the minor war against Poland, he lost it in the big war in the west. He is now attempting to recover it with political means. His prospects of success are not bright. At the end of the "first phase of the war" he talks about the "second phase" which is coming, but, in fact, it is unlikely to be so very different from the first.



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